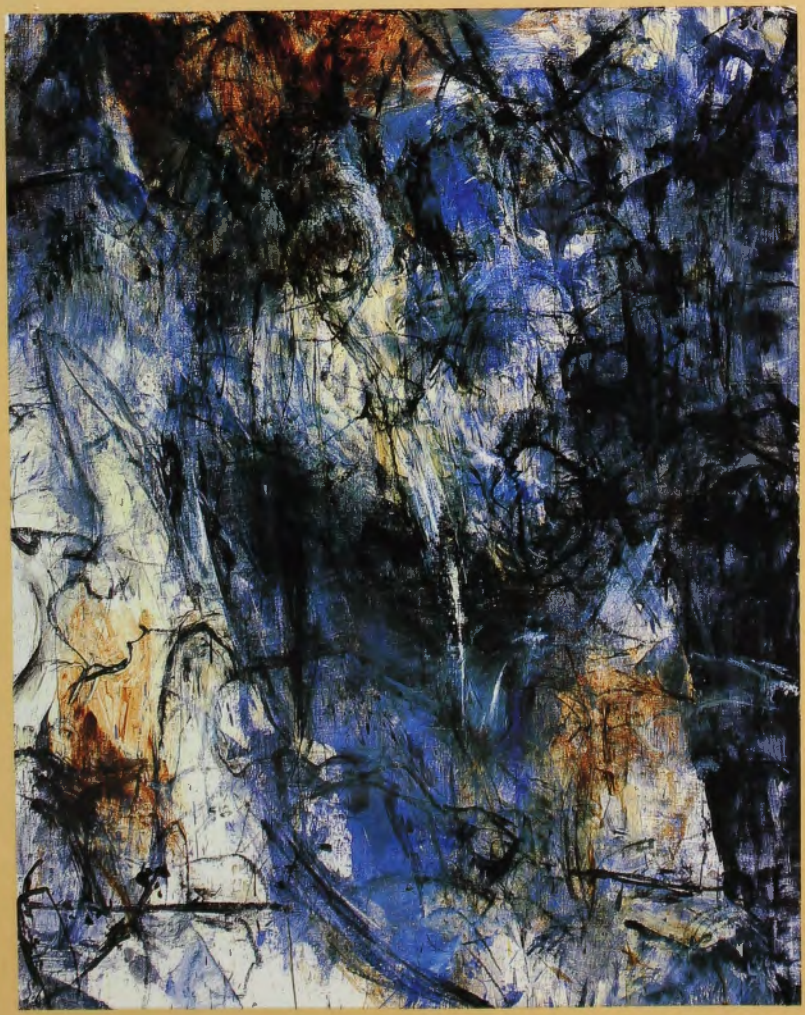
# Sulfur 43



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A LITERARY BI-ANNUAL OF THE WHOLE ART

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**COVER:** CHRISTOPHER CAMPBELL: Huron III (Black Ice), 1996, Oil, Charcoal/Linen, 60 x 48". Collection R Epping, Zurich, Switzerland


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# KENWARD ELMSLIE

## 70 I REMEMBERS

(In Celebration of Gerrit
Lansing's 70th Birthday)

### I
### SCOTLAN FARM

I Remember, during World War II, being farmed out to the Lansings: Uncle Chink, Aunt Alice, Alice, their daughter, and Gerrit, their son, one year older (fifteen?) than me.

I Remember they lived at Scotlan Farm, near Cleveland, a few miles outside a small town, Chagrin Falls.

I Remember how charmed I was by Aunt Alice's laugh. Wrinkles crinkled around eyes both startled and guarded: is this allowable? Then she'd relax and enjoy.

Her maiden name was "Scott," which explains the "Scot" in Scotlan. Aunt Alice and her sister Aunt Mary were lifelong friends of my mother, born Constance Helen Pulitzer, who died of cancer when I was ten. The Scott girls came from The South, and that's why we called them Aunt and their husbands Uncle: a Southern nicety, even though we weren't related.

I Remember the Lansing household included Selma, who did the cooking. She shuffled about in slippers, had a thick Swedish accent and unkempt hair turning gray, which occasionally found its way into food.

I Remember being a bit shocked by Uncle Chink's demeanor, dog-wrestling unabashedly on the floor of the Lansing dining/living room. From the civilized safety of a comfy sofa, sitting primly, I'd look down at postprandial gyrations, inches away: golden Irish setter and big old man—male bodies coupling friskily, but coupling.

I Remember how amazed I was by the good times that transpired in this family room: parlor games, piano music, incessant teasing, pranks, constant gab.

I Remember Uncle Chink's hawk nose looked Indian to me, as did his penetrating gaze, sharp enough to traverse vast distances—red canyons, empty prairies—capable of spying minute enemy movements far off.

I Remember how Uncle Chink's teasing delighted me. He feigned great confusion re my last name, which he changed to "Clumsly." I *was* clumsy, but I didn't mind his tomfoolery, which lent some sort of quirky panache to my insipid gaucheries, prompted by my need to apologize for existing.

I Remember how Gerrit's older sister, Alice, intimidated me. She was a chain smoker, and lumbered about a bit mannishly, in what I thought of as horsy attire—pants. She was "different," which I admired, but I was concerned she'd think me sissyish, which I was.

I Remember disliking Gerrit's older brother, Chuck, and his chipmunky wife. I resented their occasional visits, as they spoiled the romantic enchantment my imagination floated on: My Idyllic Life With The Lansings, The Greatest Best Family in the World, the family I pined for to be all, all mine.

I Remember Uncle Chink was anti-New Deal, and loved to make fun of FDR and toothy Eleanor and the idiocy of government spending. He was a businessman. My father once explained he was a specialist in rescuing failing companies, which was why The Lansings had had to pull up stakes now and again.

I Remember Aunt Alice sold eggs from their hen house: pin money. A farm family lived on their property, and worked the land, but delivering eggs to customers was her responsibility.

I Remember if a lady's slip showed, Aunt Alice would've found it proper to carol helpfully, "It's snowing."

I Remember Selma's sugar cookies, the scent of them baking. Gerrit and I washed them down with ginger-ale. Then back we'd go to books and board games and diversions that preoccupied us.

I Remember being envious of Gerrit's prowess at the piano, which seemed magical. I'd once been given piano lessons. The bees on the fence so bewildered me, I was judged unteachably "unmusical" and sent home.

I Remember Gerrit reading the sheet-music of popular songs, and how I tried to time my page-turning with finesse. I couldn't read music, so words were my salvation. No words? Panic struck. If the notes on the page formed dense clusters, I'd speed up my page-turn, and pray I'd guessed right.

I Remember Gerrit playing Hit Parade songs heard on the radio, songs we were especially enamored of:

*Skylark. Mairzy Doats and Dozy Doats and little lambs eat ivy. Manhattan Serenade. Deep Purple. K-A-L-A-M-A-Z-O-Oh I Got A Gal in Kalamazoo*...Songs from a movie, *Orchestra Wives.* Big Band songs played by Glenn Miller, Benny Goodman and Kay Kyser & His Kollege of Musical Knowledge featuring Ishkabibble, a goof with bangs.

I Remember Gerrit's telling me so many people committed suicide after listening to *Gloomy Sunday,* it had to be banned from the airwaves.

I Remember Gerrit gave me my first chance to sing to a live accompaniment–which I took totally for granted.

I Remember being awed by Gerrit's rendition of Classical Music. He gritted his teeth, but his fingers just flew across the keyboard. Chopin!

I Remember parlor games. Chinese Checkers. Monopoly. Parchesi.

I Remember we both read feverishly. Saki's *Tobermory.* Poe. I had crushes on P.G. Wodehouse (Jeeves) and Evelyn Waugh–*Decline And Fall* and *A Handful of Dust,* crushes not shared by Gerrit. Steven Vincent Benet *(John Brown's Body, Western Star)* and Alice Duer Miller *(The White Cliffs of Dover)* were my favorite poets. Around then, I wrote my first poem. It came to me in a burst–Lady Jane Grey on top of the Tower of London, beheaded by an axe.

I Remember fumbly sex experiments in the woods with Gerrit. I was a year younger, but, having been exposed to goings-on at a boys' boarding school, I assumed the role of sophisticated debaucher, which made me "bad," much to my delight.

I Remember my humiliating bed-wetting problem. After a mishap, through a window, I'd see Selma hang up the offending sheets on the clothesline, cleansed of their telltale yellow stain. No one, Gerrit included, ever mentioned, much less complained about my shameful weakness.

## II
## HARVARD

I Remember my senior year in boarding school (St. Mark's, Southboro, Mass.), I was allowed a whole weekend away, special dispensation. Saturday night, I spent with Gerrit, in a hotel room. Same bed! Sex! Scarily against the rules. Our

roles had reversed somehow: worldly Harvard frosh vs preppy naif. Then I went to visit my sister Cynthia at the Hartford Retreat. She'd had a total nervous breakdown (the reason the school let me out) and when we went for a drive, wide-eyed with martyrdom, she pointed, frantic mime so the chauffeur wouldn't hear, how the limousine doors had no inside handles. WE WERE LOCKED IN! A weird weekend—the juxtaposition of Fairy Behavior, universally frowned on and hooted at, plus Crazy Sister in Loony Bin. I was terrified the sinister convergence of two evil curses—

A) Loony Bin Sister

B) Loony Pervert (Me!)

would inexorably push me over the edge, and I'd wind up, locked away in an insane asylum. Upon my return, how relieved I felt. For all its insular, elitist pitfalls (my nickname was *Homo* and my cousin Michael Pulitzer was known as *Mike The Kike)*—how providential St. Mark's seemed. The Outsider, safe. Back. Back to my longings for a blond athlete, Richard. Longings far too deep and pervasive to ever be revealed to a living soul. Richard. Richard Kobusch. Who'd once good-naturedly goosed me in a corridor. Aghast, I'd fled. Longings. Safe. Unacted on.

I Remember at Harvard, Gerrit and I were Dunster Funsters, as was John Ashbery.

I Remember Gerrit introducing me to J.A. His stare scared me. Gerrit had showed me a poem of J.A.'s in the *Harvard Advocate.* He not only liked it, he seemed to understand it. I couldn't make head nor tail of it, which I felt was somehow my fault.

I Remember Gerrit dragging me (more mysticism!) to a Vedanta Society meeting in Boston.

I Remember how I tended to tune out when Gerrit got going on Alastair Crowley or Madam Blavatsky, or the difference between black and white magic, or alchemy, or astrology. The fact he thought, in 1948, practitioners of magic were,

well, not exactly thriving, but were still a force to be reckoned with, didn't make a lick of sense to me, so I just kept quiet.

I Remember Gerrit's Tarot pack, talk of Yeats and magic, Ouspensky, Scriabin—Gerrit's amazing maze.

I Remember Gerrit doing my astrological chart when I turned 21. He actually phoned my father, long-distance, to find out the exact second of the exact minute I was born—otherwise the chart wouldn't be accurate. I felt totally embarrassed. What a queer question to ask! I think Gerrit told me my father wasn't dead sure, but Gerrit made my chart anyway: an intricacy of signs and arrows and mysterious notations. I was Taurus. Sagittarius was rising. Cusp. Something consequential, unalterable, was in my cusp.

I Remember feeling on safer ground, chatting with Gerrit about theatre musicals: my love.

I Remember our shared passion for Rodgers & Hammerstein's *South Pacific,* which, like most musicals then, tried out in Boston pre-Broadway. The bare male torsos, glistening from tropical heat (and savvy lighting) bowled us over, and we were captivated by the lusty homoerotic camaraderie of the Sea-bees belting out *There Is Nothin' Like A Dame.* Blatant subtext: There Is Nothin' Like A Guy—Especially—Especially If He's A Sexy Sailor, That Holiest of Holy Icons, That Aphrodisiac in Summer White, That Fetish of Wanton Lust & Unbridled Beatitudinal Adoration.

I Remember Gerrit taking me to a cocktail party, exclusively, unless my eyes deceived me, made up of Harvard homosexuals. I...I felt extremely out of place.

I Remember sitting with Gerrit, compliantly, in a cafeteria, Hayes-Bickfords, late late Saturday night, and watching the fairy parade flounce in.

I Remember I enjoyed our eye-fuck forays to sailor bars in Scollay Square. And walking solo, walking and hunting, skinny kid, glasses, hunting and singing show songs to myself quietly, desolate streets, urinals, cruising the Boston Common, sailors, hunting and singing and cruising down to the Charles River, bridge, river, bridge, cruise loops, hoping against hope for a sex adventure.

## III
## FRANCE

I Remember our sharing a bed in a small hotel room—Left Bank, Paris,

I Remember our breakfasts in bed: cafe au lait and croissants. Operetta view of quaint roofs and picturesque chimneys. And the agonizingly slow, jerky elevator cage that led us to our room.

I Remember we read *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (unexpurgated!) outloud to each other, in bed. Slow-going, mitigated by the thrill of reading outlaw words in a dirty book, contraband in the USA.

I Remember Gerrit expertly expounded the theories of Jung. The Shadow Persona. Archtypes. How ancient myths keep on recurring. Astrological symbols. Earth, Fire, Water, Air. Beyond me.

I Remember Gerrit's knowing all about the notorious homosexual thief-writer, Jean Genet.

I Remember our rushing to see a Roland Petit ballet based on Genet—*'Adam Miroire*—about a sailor. Mirrors.

I Remember Gerrit joining us Elmslies (Vivien, my sister and my father) in a palatial mansion on the Riviera. Its claim to fame was it appeared in the film *The Red Shoes.* One night, I

reached to turn on the light, and instead of a chain, I grabbed hold of a human hand. A ghost hand. This inexplicable happening seemed to validate Gerrit's obsession with magic. Maybe it wasn't all guff. I felt closer to him.

I Remember a family auto excursion to Italy, Gerrit's nose buried in his guidebook. My father grew impatient with his expansive read-outs of Must-Sees.

## IV
## NYC

I Remember midtown lunches with Gerrit, at modest French restaurants that invariably served onion soup, coq au vin, and wine by the carafe–very sophisticated repasts, so we thought.

I Remember our eye-fuck jaunts to sailor bars around Times Square.

I Remember we knew Lester Judson, a grotesquely fat show-biz song-writer who'd written a big hit for Eartha Kitt–*I Want To Be Evil*–because EVIL backwards spells LIVE.

I Remember Gerrit introducing me to the Ever Hard (sic) Baths. We shared a cubicle with two single beds. An old man came in, and began groping us, while gushing about us being "angels."

I Remember our craze for Tab Hunter, and how we ventured far afield to Brooklyn to see the sad preem of his first movie, *Island of Desire,* costarring Linda Darnell. It was a hopeless dud that provided John Latouche with a comedy routine: Linda's basso profundo, contrasted to Tab's high, Disney squirrel voice.

I Remember our craze for *Tomorrow's Man*–discreet predecessor of gay skinzines. Cute boys in jockstraps, very clean-cut, doing gymnastics. Cadets sprucing up for The Prom.

I Remember a louche acquaintance of Gerrit's, who ended up on the front page of the *Daily News.* He was accused of murdering a millionairess he shacked up with in Haiti. Cruising in Central Park, he wore sailor whites as a pick-up ploy.

I Remember Gerrit's apartment on Morton Street in the Village. He knew the poets Ashbery, Schuyler, O' Hara, and their chum, the painter Jane Freilicher, several years before I did.

I Remember Gerrit's style of drinking coffee—quick nervous iddy-biddy schlurps. And bird-like head-dips. I found his head-dips so irritating, I stuck a description in a prose-collage in *Album,* an early book of mine.

*GERRIT IN THE HOTEL OF DEATH*

*Gerrit sips as no human being I have ever seen. He holds the cup tilted to his lips, his lips reach out and enfold the lip of the cup, and he holds it there tipping it slightly, bending like those toy birds perched on the edges of water glasses in drugstore windows a few years back.*

*How tiny the amount of liquid that enters his mouth per sip. Dip dip dip dip. Dip dip dip dip. His lips stretch out, enveloping the lip of the cup, busy as a one-legged man at an ass-kicking.*

I Remember Billy Rose, the famous producer and columnist, coming to the penthouse where I lived with John Latouche (67th Street, between Lex & Third). Gerrit was pressed into service as pianist, so Billy Rose could hear a snatch of John's new lyrics for Offenbach's *Orpheus in the Underworld,* which he'd commissioned. Absolutely nothing came of his visionary project—a Met-scale opera rep entirely in English, with all translations done by first-rate lyricists—Cole Porter was on his list. Basically, he was looking for a way to lose a fortune fast. His grandiose project was actually a grudge ploy so his ex (Eleanor Holm) would get less alimony and moolah.

I Remember how Gerrit and I savored Donald Fuller's surreal stories. He was a one-eyed alcoholic composer John Latouche had collaborated with, fitfully, with whom I worked on an extremely oddball musical about a mixed doubles tennis tournament. Title: *Thirty-Love,* which Frank O'Hara misheard, with ESP acuity, as *Dirty Love.* We saw a great deal of Donald. After dinner, in his cups, he'd regale Latouche, Gerrit, Harry Martin (an ex of John's) and I with his loopy tales. One began, "When the moon came over the mountain, Kate Smith fell into a coma."

I Remember afternoons of "writing assignments" with Gerrit. One involved retelling a Greek legend, disguising it as a short story. Mine, *The Weather of Ripeness,* ended up in a literary magazine: *Folder*—a first publication for me.

I Remember we both especially adored the works of Jane Bowles. We were fascinated how her obsession with food insinuated itself into her writings. The scuttlebutt was: she was blocked on a play, *In The Summerhouse,* slated for a Broadway production by an eminent producer/close friend, Oliver Smith. As the weeks of work blockage lengthened, he'd drop in, sneak a glance at the manuscript while she mixed them a cocktail, only to see lists of menus for a picnic scene, lists that grew longer. No dialogue, just menus. The play, finally finished, flopped so badly financially, Oliver's hair fell out, and he repaired to Hollywood to recoup by designing sets for the movie of *Guys And Dolls.* The picnic scene was a virtuoso *coup de theatre*—a food farce culture clash, Latino vs Wasp, ending with a hilarious fracas of hurled spaghetti.

I Remember we both revered W. H. Auden. We went to see *The Age of Anxiety* performed by the New York City Ballet, music by Leonard Bernstein, choreography by Jerome Robbins, sets by Oliver Smith—to us, an astonishing "breakthrough" event.

I Remember how we loved the voice of Lotte Lenya, and the songs of Weill-Brecht. Also the songs of Weill-in-exile, particularly *Speak Low* from *One Touch of Venus,* lyric by Ogden Nash, sung by Mary Martin.

I Remember Gerrit playing from sheet-music my one jukebox hit and first published song—*Love-wise,* vocal by Nat King Cole, music by Marvin Fisher. We went to a bar, plunked dime after dime in a jukebox, just to hear it one more time.

I Remember the almost worshipful way Gerrit said the name "Eileen Garrett." She was a famous medium, and a good friend of Touche's, who once came to our penthouse to deal with a ghost problem. John couldn't sleep. A desperately unhappy spirit kept rattling around our bedroom. Eileen, formidable and not goofy in any way, paid us a call, sniffed around matter-of-factly, and somehow exorcised the tormented spirit. A janitor later told us a man had committed suicide by leaping from our balcony, years before.

I Remember Gerrit and I agreed *L'Hotel* was the greatest song ever written. How tenderly Gerrit played it, and how patiently he taught me to sing it, despite the fact I couldn't read music, and had to memorize it by ear.

I Remember one time Aunt Alice came to call on me (NYC) and, unwittingly, let the cat out of the bag. I was in my late twenties, living with John Latouche, my idol-as-lyricist/mentor/mate. The cat, hush-hush info, was this: my sister Cynthia, who felt obligated to mother motherless me long after this was remotely feasible, somehow found out from The Hanover Bank that I'd given a chunk of my inheritance to John, who was always broke. Cynthia made a special secret trip to NYC to confer with Daddy about Helpless-Kenward-Taken-Advantage-Of-By-This-Scurrilous-Fortune-Hunting-Youth-Molester-Older-Man. Or some such hobbledehoy. According to Aunt Alice, Daddy told Cynthia to mind her own business—I was over 21. Aunt Alice smiled,

"So everything is all right," happy to be the bearer of glad tidings. I hid my fury from her: maniacal meddling! Betrayal beyond the pale! Hateful loony family! As opposed to The Greatest Best Family in the World: The Lansings.

I Remember decades later, I typed up my mother's teenage diary as an 80th birthday present to my widowed sister Cynthia. In the diary, my mother mentions Mr. E has abruptly departed. The English Mr. E had been hired to tutor her younger brother, Herbert, and any dalliance with Constance Pulitzer was not to be countenanced. Obviously, he was a fortune-hunter, eager to bag a millionaire's daughter. Why else would he woo such a shy, sickly wallflower? Mr. E was sent packing, and she was forbidden further contact with him. The diary reveals this forced separation proved porous, thanks to the benign intervention of Alice and Mary: the Scott sisters. A diary entry refers to a debt ($1) Constance owes Mr. E that must be paid, and possibly indiscreet letters to him he must return to her. One thing leads to another; letters from Mr. E to Alice and Mary make their way to Constance, who is found to be suffering from tuberculosis, a disease unmentionable in polite society. Deemed spoiled goods, a social pariah, Constance repairs to a health resort, Colorado Springs, where dry mountain air and rest, lots of rest, heals lungs. Her diary stops pre-TB, but her travails end happily. Mr. E fails to prove himself worthy of her hand by becoming a millionaire via land speculation in Canada. In fact he loses the grubstake his family has loaned him. So he's spoiled goods too. He hooks up with her in Colorado Springs, marries her, and Constance Helen Pulitzer Elmslie bears him two daughters and a son—me. So my father knew all about Fortune Hunter paranoia, first hand, and Aunt Alice knew all about couples cursed with family members bent on tearing them asunder.

## V
## NEW ENGLAND

I Remember one summer on Martha's Vineyard, the *Candide* Summer, Leonard Bernstein and John Latouche took a dim view of The Young—Gerrit and I. We'd revealed our craze for a cool-voiced jazz musician, of a devastatingly slack-jawed empty-eyed beauty—Chet Baker. His zombie voice so infuriated Lenny & Touche, they forgot their collaborative clashes, and (unanimity for a change) railed at us for having "no past," branded us delinquents, orphaned amid barbarisms we bowed down to cravenly: "coolth."

I Remember Gerrit helping gather in hay from the fields around John's and my house in Calais, Vermont. Shirtless, he expertly forked the hay onto a truck, pitching in, working alongside farmer neighbors in need of cow fodder. I was startled by his zest: the Scotlan Farm farmboy, tending to chores—a Gerrit I'd never seen.

I Remember after John Latouche's funeral at Calais, John's brother, a drunken redneck psycho, pulled out a knife, after he'd boasted of killing a "Nigger." Gerrit, Harry Martin, Ruth Yorck (German emigré poet) and I fled uphill to the safety of a neighbor's house for the night.

I Remember Gerrit's taking me to meet a very precious (to him) poet. As queer as Dick's hatband, Steve Jonas reminded me of the freaks in the fairy parade we'd gawked at, back a good ways, at Hayes-Bickfords. His place was such a hoorah's nest, I didn't feel I was in Boston, which I was. Rio favela? Calcutta untouchable? I couldn't figure out why on earth Gerrit wanted me to meet this sad dreg, who spoke a coded, non sequitur lingo I found impenetrable.

I Remember staying with Gerrit in Jack Hammond's castle in Gloucester. A septuagenarian multimillionaire inventor, with a wife, a mistress and a boy friend (Harry Martin), Jack

Hammond shared John's and Gerrit's predilection for the occult. He experimented with Eileen Garrett, putting her inside a copper cage to find out if the comings and goings of the spirits she encountered in seances left a vibratory spoor. Copper wires attached to sensitive instruments he'd devised were to reveal all. No dice.

I Remember showing off to Gerrit, dancing (fake Broadway, Jerome Robbins) about the stone floor of the castle's huge medieval hall with cathedral-sized arches. I had to quit in mid-pelvic thrust. I'd grown too heavy and I was out of breath.

I Remember walking down to the harbor to visit a poet Gerrit thought highly of, and was eager to meet. The poet, a big burly man, reminded me of a friendly postman in a Pagnol film. He was devoid of literary airs, and made us feel right at home. He presented us each with signed copies of a simply printed poem. His name was Charles Olson.

# KENNETH IRBY

## TWO POEMS

The king's seal and the king's reef are in the sky
the sleek head stretched and the solemn imprint
and the ridge furl reached and struck
and the king is generation
Then take up the empery and the dominion and return them
as the rabbits at the salt lick take what is left for the deer
and the long stare back into the woods for the others
The water that is in the sky and the land and the hand
pass on in one direction West with the eagles
and with the spin of blackbirds back against the other
And you are the continuance and the impress and the delivery
and the -dication, the in and the from and the pre and the to

*

There are mounds in the dense woods of Northeast corners
and the Northeasts
encircling for thousands of years their own reason for being
to the game and its plenty as near the eye and the skin of the
eye
as the bare feet to their earth

*

Already at Equinox a carved pumpkin guards the door to the
next house
two young men bare skinned attend at one a.m. and leave to
light the coming of Fall

On the steps there is a cup of leaves just started turning, still
turning, overturning flame

rustling in the wind in there, sea surge
to sip the air between crashes on the light shore and returns

From under a different tree, into a different weal

## ESTO ES ÉPICO Y ES LÍRICO

(at Rubén Darío's birthday)

One dog jumps out for the big yellow plastic bone, out from the porch of mistings
held back at first by the mystery of mastery, the mistery in a knowledge, just there in the seeing of it, and then let loose
and the other bounds out for the tennis ball from the opposite direction
orange liqueur and brandy and one drop of bitter elixir, they meet
and the ball that is not a ball but a rounded shrub of a cylinder, oblation of flowerdom
rolls up from their meeting, not bone, not uncurtained, but green and generational
The generosity of dogs, just there in the sight of them, one dog, met and the mass more than critical
and the sight more than nova the holding, the bone and the bone absorbed and the ball picked up and absorbed
dog life misted out of the greens and the porch of greens
sight was made for, place is made of

# ANNE GORRICK

## WILTWICK, WALLKILL AS MEMORY

**A**: Fragments of an empire
because there are Girls who take
care of the fragments
because the rhododendron

Lilac, opium, detections
of the parts in heat
Gold modernities, a true sun

Book of bougainvillea, chalk
Angels of the sun in the dark
Diaphragm, right-hander of the
indifferent light
in the memory of a human fever
Inhabit the fire in Esopus, the Dutch
course

**B**: Fragments of a rhododendron
Mother-of-pearl, beads, girls who
around the care of catch
catch the fragments of an empire
the empire around their throats

The gold modernities in his of the lilacs
are rectified
The light has the taste of metaphor in it
A detection in this relative of memory

A true sun sticking to record Western
comforts delivers

bougainvillea, chalk
center keeps center bone worse

Each window: diaphragm, day, rock lime
Wiltwick, Wallkill in a human report of
fever to live in fire
Esopus and Dutch run

**C**: The light likes metaphor in it
Girls who take care of the
fragments of a clear rhododendron
Gold currencies on the lilacs, opium

A real sun substituted with adhesive tape
Book of bougainvillea, chalk
The empire without bits of angels
Each window the day's iris

**D**: The ash, the nacre of the empire
around its throat
Detection in the heat of parts
gold fallen over lilacs
A real sun taped
to the west key of the island
Chalk and Bougainvillea
crèche made from chest bones
Bits of angels the sun swallowed in the
dusk of that whore-dark sea

The human being resides on fire
in a fevered memory

**E**: Light like metaphor in each sea
ash of the nut/mother bead
girl, who waits around the fragments
of bright rhododendron
in the realm around begin

Exposure in the gold coins pleases over
The thighs apart for the window
an exposure in familiar

A real sun, a western island ribbon
supplies bougainvillea, chalk,
a crib of bone
The realm corrects from the
inside outside
The sun swallowed in the density whore
of the sea
a real sun by a ribbon replace

The indifferent light by each tiger lily
calcium carbonate, abort in a memory
fever

F: Light like fragments of an empire
Rhododendron, ashes from
mother-of-pearl
Girls waiting around fragments
Ash against their necks

The lilac, the opium, revelation in gold
coins
lilac of thighs apart
a revelation in the familiar
A puts on again the shirt

A real sun delivers bougainvillea
crib filled with bones of an empire
without pieces of angels
That a real sun was replaced by a ribbon

The indifferent light by tiger lilies,
limestone, window
Wiltwick, Wallkill in a memory of fever
The human resident on fire in Esopus
and the Dutch voyage licking the burn

caused by the author of Huguenot and sleep

We are the sleeping fragments of an empire

Note: Wiltwick is the original Dutch name for a settlement which is now Kingston, NY. During the Second Esopus War in 1663, Indians attacked Wiltwick and Hurley massacring many inhabitants to protest the Dutch selling one of their leaders into slavery.

Wallkill and Esopus are both town names and rivers, "kill" meaning "creek" in Dutch.

# ROSMARIE WALDROP

## *from* RELUCTANT GRAVITIES

### CONVERSATION 13
### ON THE WAYS OF THE BODY

In important ways, he says, the ways of the body, speaking in one's imagination cannot be compared to crying out loud, or only like tennis with a ball and tennis without one. Yet the games are similar. This is why the idea of another world can still net a sunlit slope when the valley is already dark and we should reach for a glass of wine. Grist of images. But ordinarily I don't think of "inner events" shadowing my speech. Just as I don't worry if my sperm have long or short tails.

And what can writing not be compared to? she asks. Having a ball? A child growing from your long-tailed sperm? A boatload of foreigners climbing the Statue of Liberty, waving flags? The price of deciphering seems to be transparency. Also called fainting. The wings of the dragonfly are beautiful, but the body is not itself. I want the missing meat, bone, metabolism and ratios of heat and hunger. At the price of windows muddied with fingerprints.

Thinking runs between speech and above pigeonholes, he says, but our one sky falls on the street, leaving puddles. I worry beads between my fingers and how to revive dead letters. Or does a flower out of rubble say less for life than how meager our claims? The image is consumed in the missing detail, the gap of promise. But suddenly a word gets down on all fours and sniffs at your crotch. Or a memory screams on your cheeks while you try to hold on to the edgy afternoon.

The dog, she says. There is always a dog. But this warm flick of a tongue. Grass softer than sleep, and the dog standing over me, panting, penis flaming red from under his yellow coat and crooked as though in pain. Warm flick of tongue on my face. Wet shock. Worried boundary or bone.

## CONVERSATION 14
## ON BLIND MAN'S BUFF

Was I frightened by what I saw, she asks, or by my own eyes? Red, crooked penis. Did my hand follow its logic into blind man's buff? Did I learn to read in order to purge incomprehensible desires? A prisoner of memory regenerating in the marrow, the red power of a dog, or the stranger need of language? Missing transport by muscle or metaphor. So that I bite my lip and see beside the point.

Are you saying that greater density attracts more matter? he asks. Of fact? That abstract means distance? That our parents' act has exploded the present indicative? Nothing has ever been deciphered but turned out beasts coupling. Even books spot with secret menstrual blood and propagate their species. My hand forms letters of unambiguous design. Or are you preparing me for new ways of behavior?

Old ways, she says. Though sometimes I feel you less as an animal than huge rampant vegetation taking root inside me, covering my whole world, from top to there's no bottom, with sheer presence. And me almost bursting out of my skin, a drop of water, all surface tension. Now I spread more like a puddle, my body relaxing away from me, no matter how firmly I decline its offers of expansion.

Does it even make sense to say "then" and "now," he asks, when our world expands in every direction away from itself and the speed of light is measured to be the same regardless of how we are moving? Maybe it's the frame that strikes resemblance until the fullness of time allows all forms to dissolve? I know, aging is not an article of a woman's religion. Every night, we cover our nakedness to dry the ink. Every morning the page is as empty as the scene of a crime.

## CONVERSATION 15
## ON SHARING

Why is it, she asks, that we cannot share experience, not even under the same sheet? Rain falling or not. That my pleasure in your pleasure is unsteady like decaying atoms or continents mapped in a dream? The light of difference sharper than the warmth of next to or the same wild cucumber vine. We expected pursuit to close on happiness. But it remains pursuit, the happiness intermittent, a meteorite igniting as it passes through our air.

Any text crumbles, he says, even if we approach the tree before the leaves are falling. And the gaps don't let the light show through, let alone the color of quarks. The photographer says smile as if an unease with family likeness could be refocused as identity. In spite of superhuman efforts to keep my dead father's body from encroaching on mine, I am caught, moon in eclipse, an eager atom weighing toward form out of sheer need for anxiety.

Intermittent, she says, as if a space of time, too, could not be occupied by two bodies. Even bodies of experience and memory. As if we had no history, only a past purloined by nothing to show for it. The way I feel robbed in the morning, dreams bleached by the rush of too bright light. A film gone white, with only stray bits of raw dark. The body inhabits those as consciousness inhabits forgetting. And the gap between pain and knowing recloses the way matter comes to in the light.

Our love moved with the slowness of an object, he says. Blueshifted as sitting for a portrait where you can't grudge time. It awakened fingers at the tip of our words, chambers in the heart. Then suddenly everything too close, a splinter under the skin. The model has gotten a cramp, the cat eaten her young. Vertigo of reflections, the smooth surface lost in eddies and currents.

## CONVERSATION 16
## ON CHANGE

A splinter lodged in the brain, he says, this effort to trap fluctuations in wavelength or feeling. To see not only both duck and rabbit in the puzzle, but to freeze the moment of flip. Or a moment of aging. Is it too subtle, like grass growing, like the size of a proton? Or is our inability more categorical, the way a shadow cannot catch the light, or the eye see its blind spot? Do I love your face because it is yours or because of the way it differs from circle, parabola, ellipse?

Perhaps we need change to see what's there, she says. And ambiguity, to be aware of seeing. Seven types of apples. But focus on the curvature of the lens, and night gains all color, torpor all deeds, even their reflections in the river. Pores stop their doors. The grass is blunt with mass, the sky not infinite, just soot.

So we should not watch each single breath, he asks, but simply take in the world and hold it in our body? With the roots laboring in the ground? with poplars standing straight and stiff in the acid rain? And breath by breath set it down again and not worry how *is* connects with *the case?* Like an acrobat? An acrobat.

There are things, she says, we cannot say. But to keep them down in the body doesn't save us. Even if use equals meaning, nakedness may not rise to the occasion of high noon. Legend says time began when an eagle pierced the sun and was consumed in fire. Moment of transfiguration, sublime and pitiful. The mind suffering sunstroke, overcome by its own light just when it thinks it is defeating the darkness.

# DAN FEATHERSTON

## ODORS

At Vetlianka all the plague patients diffused an odor of
**honey**.
At Athens bees flew from a bull's entrails
& hornets from warlike horses.
In Egypt plagues swarmed out of the desert
like dark clouds & hovered over the cities.
In quarantine, hived away in cells.

*

Nursing infants
sour **butter**.

*

Scarlet fever
**bread** hot from the oven.

*

Menstruation distinguished by an odor of **leather**.
Saddled in blood, straddled abattoir of the body
turned inside out, hung to dry
between earth & sky.
Birth & death.
Hide: to turn "animal" inside out.

*

Suppressed menstruation
odor of **hops**
grain's combustion.

*

The Hungarian monk was able to decide
the chastity of females by smell alone.

*

The smell of fear
**blood** mingled with **electricity**.

*

The diabetic produces an odor of **apples**.
Breath's white-flowered branch
tinged brass like sunlight
caramelized in her skin.

*

In the paroxysms of hysteria & epilepsy
the hair's specific odor of **ozone**.

*

Hysterics will produce an odor of **violets**–
frenzied hue of bloomed earth,
sanitarium's guerdon
laced up in white jackets.

*

The sweat of lunatics resembles that of yellow **deer** or **mice**.
Scuttling between rooms, feverish in the wall.
Some glimpsed wilderness.

*

Measles: the smell of freshly plucked **feathers**.
Attributed to pillows
wet with fever
spotted skin pricked raw.

*

After sex the odor of **chloroform**
owing to a peculiar secretion
of the buccal glands.
A volatile, sweet taste
sluiced from loosed limbs.

*

Orteschi met a young lady who exhaled the strong odor of
**vanilla**
from the joints of her fingers.

*

The syphilitic produces an odor of stagnant **water**
as if the sexual turbine
turned in upon
itself.

*

The odor of typhoid
that of **blood**.

*

Chorea produces an odor of **pineapple**.
St. Vitus never tasted a pineapple
but might have thought of the dance
as a kind of torrid sweetness
under the tough exterior of Roman law.

*

Lethargy & catalepsy produce a **cadaverous** odor.
Some people have a cadaverous odor their whole life.
A prophecy.
A hint.

# ROBERTO TEJADA

## THE PHOTOGRAPHY OF HORACE BRISTOL

The first issue of *Life* magazine appeared in late November of 1936. The ironic word-play of the caption—"LIFE BEGINS"—printed under the opening image of a surgeon holding a newborn, was unconsciously prophetic perhaps of the determinant uses photography would pose thereafter to the cultural and economic future of the United States.[1] The editors of *Life* were resolved to emulate the new style of photojournalism coined earlier in Germany whereby narrative threads were told by way of sequence. A year after its inception, the magazine hired Horace Bristol, a "4 x 5 specialist," to join a team that included Alfred Eisenstaedt and Margaret Bourke-White.

A friend and colleague of renown figures such as Ansel Adams, Imogen Cunningham, Dorothea Lange and Edward Weston, Horace Bristol (1908-1997) fulfilled an active career as a photographer during the three important decades of what John Berger has called photography's greatest "transparency"—before the medium began to show symptoms of creative self-inspection. Bristol's images span from urban street scenes, architectural studies of the early industrial landscape of his native California, and the story of struggle as lived by migrant workers to naval missions during World War II, its aftermath, and the traditional life of Japan. In the process, Bristol would become a crucial figure in the historic switch, commensurate with the aims of photojournalism, to the smaller Contax or Leica 35mm camera—and later in the 1950s, from German optics to the Nikon lens.

In reference to the work of W. Eugene Smith, Horace Bristol admired the "immediate power [of an image] rather than its ability to make one reflect on it as an aesthetic object." Bristol, too, aimed for the expository force of the image freed of superfluous artistic rhetoric. With his faith in social document, the task Bristol saw facing the photographer was "to analyze critically the material at hand, and with judgment untempered by mercy, eliminate all but the significant."

This tendency can be traced as far back as Bristol's formal studies taken of bridges and oil fields in Los Angeles and San Francisco. These classic modernist renderings of geometric patterns extracted from

industrial and public works—made even more monumental as set against dwarfed human figures—reflect Bristol's training as an architect, with his interest as such in the volumes that define and delimit urban social space. They also bear witness to the new heroic moment that the United States was entering—one of increased economic power as exemplified by its civic projects and factory plants.

After a series of photographs on Depression-era San Francisco, Bristol accompanied Dorothea Lange on trips to the Central Valley of California where hundreds of men, women and children had arrived in search of work, fleeing the drought that had devastated other parts of the country, especially Oklahoma. Bristol later contacted novelist John Steinbeck in the hope of having him collaborate with an essay to accompany his photographs on the conditions of work there and the relations between strikers and authorities.[2]

*Joad Family Applying for Relief* shows the configuration of five migrant workers—their emotionally-distinct faces a concurrence of reticence, laughter, glowers and blank expressions; the hand of one man wrapped in heavy bandages. They are depicted in high contrast as they face a government functionary whose slicked-back hair we see from behind, as though Bristol's intention were to make this figure a surrogate for the viewer. Unlike Dorothea Lange's renderings of migrant workers—where composition tends to be austere—Bristol generally packs considerable movement into his images, presenting his subjects as active in extricating themselves from such bleak conditions. In *Retarded Man and Fanatic Sister,* the image is taken from a slightly elevated point of view, as though the subjects could literally step out of the frame by which they are bound. Awareness of the camera provokes stiff gestures from the two as they reach for each other's hands—the focal point of the image whereby mental handicap and religious fervor are joined as concomitant realities within the failure of a promised land.

With the outbreak of World War II, Horace Bristol was hired by Edward Steichen to form part of the Naval Aviation Photographic Unit. One of Bristol's most impressive images is from 1944—a year in which war had escalated considerably in the Pacific, and Bristol was sent to join an American crew of PBY amphibious planes on a mission at Rabaul Harbor, New Guinea. There, the gunner manning Bristol's plane spotted a downed marine fighter pilot, severely injured and unable to swim. The young gunner immediately stripped naked, diving into the water and eventually dragging the pilot back to safety. Both wet and still nude, the gunner wasted no time in adjusting his headphones again and returning to position at his machine gun as the plane and crew managed to make their escape. The image of the gunner as he is

rendered posed at his war machine– sunlight refracting the water in beads along his back and buttocks–combines the pleasure and awe derived from looking at a hero's naked body in the mythic eroticism of rescue. *(PBY Blister Gunner, Rescue at Rabaul)*

After the war, Bristol worked as a free-lance photographer covering Asia for *Fortune* magazine, settling in Tokyo with his first wife and children. The images from this period in Japan are divided between those that reveal the devastation and ruin wrought by war *(Bombed-Out Factory, Tokyo)*, the altered urban life as a result of U.S. occupation *("Angel of the Night," Prostitute Waiting for G.I. Customers)* and the industrial signs of reconstruction *(Welding in Shipyard, Kure)*. He also turned his eye to the traditional life of Japan, with studies of geishas in Kyoto, the religious ceremony of Buddhist enclaves, and women kelp divers off Hatsushima Island. In one image, the sensual dignity of these divers–the supple form of their uncovered breasts; their coy recognition of the camera–creates a striking contrast with the masks and headgear that are reminders of the fact that, no matter what we may bring to the image as viewers, what we witness is ultimately a means of living.[3]

By contrast, another series Bristol undertook during his stay in Japan is a study of the organized crime gangs known as the *yakuza*, one of whose identity rituals, and a test of strength, was performed by way of tattooing. Bristol captured the tattoo artist or *sensei* in the process itself, or *yakuza* members bathing together in a public bath; an image which–taken from a distance and through a thin veil of steam–celebrates their clustered bodies almost entirely covered with elaborate designs. In these and many of his most powerful images, Bristol demonstrates a knowledge of how the denotative and connotative aspects of representation are manifest themselves in the interplay between a society's own welcome and less desirable signs, as rendered by the photographer in images which make it impossible to ignore the cultural specificity of context.

Horace Bristol died last year in Ojai, California. Already confined to a wheelchair, he had been diagnosed with cancer. He was a man who, over forty years ago, had wanted all his negatives to be destroyed in the devastating wake of his first wife's tragic suicide; a man who, for several decades, had renounced the camera altogether. It was only during this last phase of his life that Bristol returned to his images–close to 16,000–as if to be reconciled with the accountable memory of a personal past and with the shadowy promise of permanence in photographs now animated after years of oblivion.

An exhibition of his work was shown shortly after his death in Mexico–a country where, on the shore of Lake Chapala, Jalisco, he had

lived with his second wife, Masako, and their children Akiko and Henri, from 1964 to 1976. In a statement for that exhibition he had written: "I am 88 years old. As history this is a mere trifle. But to anyone with even a beginner's knowledge of photography, 88 years spans half the days from the camera obscura to the most modern digital camera."

In that span, photography for Horace Bristol was the practice of registering the mark and sweep of things offered and dictated by the flux of life—a practice animated by a desire to chronicle all things whether by convocation or direct response. With a scope that reaches between East and West, between world war and family life, between industry and poverty, between icon and index, the work of Horace Bristol tells the bracing story of how the blurry edges between determined practice and inclusive desire can be brought over time into focus.

## Notes

1 The expanding use of images heralded by *Life* and other publications like it—both in reportage and advertising—gave birth to what we now know as the mass media. *Life* magazine's inaugural image can now be seen also as a symbol of the emergent capacity that nation would historically fulfill, both as a political power and in terms of the new circulation of images destined for consumption. Among others, see Gisèle Freund, *Photography and Society* (Boston: David R. Godine, 1982).

2 Neither a *Life* piece nor a potential book project ever materialized. Steinbeck decided to pull out from the project so as to write his famous and best-selling novel *The Grapes of Wrath,* with elements drawn heavily from Bristol's photographs which, however, were later used in the casting of the Hollywood version of the book. This alone is an interesting anecdote illustrating the ambiguous role of photography in the face of newer, more powerful institutions like that of the film industry.

3 Patricia G. Berman has underlined the important fact that Bristol's images of Japan and Asia countered the stereotypes of Japanese culture harbored by the popular American press between 1941 and 1945. Patricia G. Berman, "Horace Bristol's Photojournalism: Art, the Mass Media, & The Contingent Career" in *Stories From Life: The Photography of Horace Bristol* (Georgia: Georgia Museum of Art, University of Georgia, 1995), pp. 42–74.

# HORACE BRISTOL

## SIX PHOTOGRAPHS

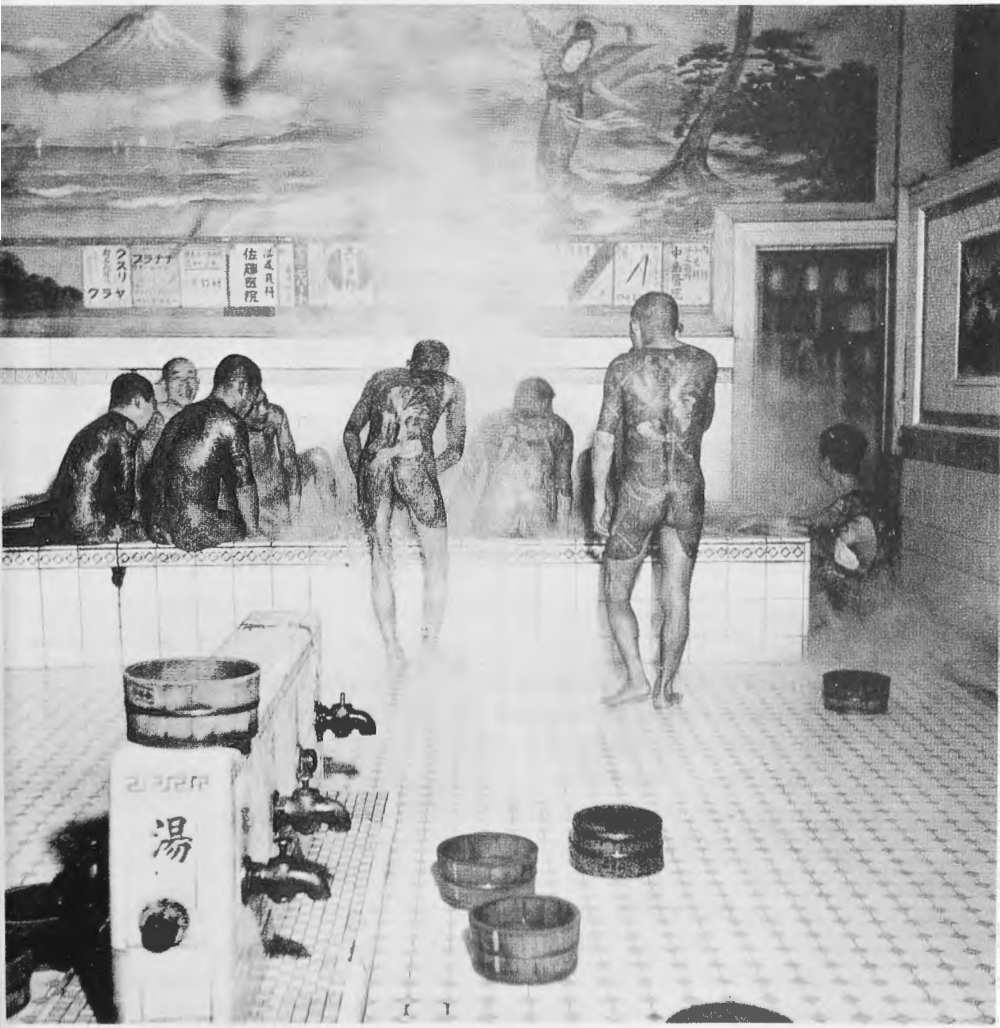
***Street Bridge with Figures, Pattern in Steel and Shadow*, 1938**
*Gallery of Contemporary Photography, Santa Monica, California*

***Joad Family Applying for Relief,***
**from "The Grapes of Wrath Series," 1938**
*Gallery of Contemporary Photography, Santa Monica, California*

***PBY Blister Gunner, Rabaul Harbor,* 1944**
*Gallery of Contemporary Photography, Santa Monica, California*

***Diving Girls of Hatsushiima Donning Masks Before Diving*, 1947**
*Gallery of Contemporary Photography, Santa Monica, California*

***Woman Seaweed Diver, Hatsushiima Island*, 1947**
*Gallery of Contemporary Photography, Santa Monica, California*




***Yakuza Showing Off Tattoos*, 1947**
*Gallery of Contemporary Photography, Santa Monica, California*

# ALAN GILBERT

## TWO POEMS

### HOME ON THE STRANGE

Determinate redux, but still making it up
as we go along.
The language already guilty before it's spoken.
Mistaking a tree for a tree. History is
a sample more than ample in its contexts.
You can't leave yet; you just got here.
An aphasic fit. An uncertain time.

Capital is sloppy, deadly,
like an outhouse black widow waiting to bite.
Mainlining social narcotics, the purest forms
are also the most corrupt. The goddamn cops
keep beating people up.
Window to warehouse to abandoned factory,
a vignette of urban inversion, of displaced labor.
Helicopter rattling the whole scene.

In an alternative to the economy,
an alternative economy,
we will all work for the collective good.
Looking for lucidity during the course of the day.
Looking for respect.
A running gunfight all the way to "what border?"
foot heavy on the gas.

## TEARS FLOODING THE AUTUMNAL FIELDS
## OR
## SONGS OF A DEAD DREAMER

Cannonballs against the popsicle stick palace,
like waves of sound flooding a tunnel.
A culture exhausted by the new,
where a blue hood crumples up to the windshield,
and a television rots beside the river.

> Whether the emperor wears clothes or not,
> the emperor has got to go.
> A new sun rose fiery and hot,
> suffusing the landscape with a faint red glow.

History's permanent scaffolding is draped with new
and tattered signs. A police car silently circles the block.
We know better. An allegorical rush for the exits.
Saying, I'm feeling free for a moment.
Enough mundane departures upsetting expectations.

> "Behold them seated in their glory,
> The kings of mine and rail and soil!
> What have you read in all their story,
> But how they plundered toil?"

A politics of the imagination
caught in the cross-fire.
A shiny orange bounces in slow motion
through the gray roil of Maiden Lane,
as I lean my shoulder against a revolving glass door.

# ELIOT WEINBERGER

## VOMIT

Out of sheer boredom, Kafka notes in his diary, he washed his hands five times in a row. He lived in the age before MTV. Now the bored, the depressed, the tired, the blank, and the slightly ill can stare at an unending series of rapidly flashing, strange and arresting images, with people who are far more attractive than those who show up in one's dreams. (Why bother to sleep?) Yesterday's transgression is today's decor: MTV is *Un Chien Andalou* at the speed of light, at a corporate budget: a cabinet of curiosities the size of Xanadu.

Out of sheer boredom, and with clean hands, I turned on MTV twice in recent months, and both times was disappointed to find that the staccato dreamtime of the videos had been replaced by linear and conventional programs. The first was a comedy show, featuring an unremarkably pretty young woman as a lawyer. She walks into a conference room of suited yuppies, male and female, sitting at a long polished table, and immediately vomits at such length and so copiously that it covers the entire table. Unfazed, her colleagues proceed to pluck out pieces with their fingers which they identify as the remains of certain dishes from various elegant restaurants. (We watched no more that afternoon.)

A few nights later, I stared again, this time at their annual self-celebration, "The MTV Awards." Sex, dancing, or having a good time—once as intrinsic to rock & roll as amplification and the *double entendre*—seemed to have dropped out entirely. The main topic was mutability: lachrymose tributes to rap stars who had been murdered in the last year and unhappy humorous references to the fact that almost none of the stars present had been known a year ago, and would undoubtedly be forgotten by next year. The secondary topic was excreta: a popular group of slinky women singers was introduced sitting on toilets, and the vomit jokes, all unmemorable, were relentless. I soon began to notice vomit everywhere; far more vomit on television, in movies or the latest novels, than one normally sees on the sidewalk.

The simpler explanation is that MTV, like all popular culture, is oppressed on two sides. Images are quickly depleted and must be ceaselessly replenished for a listless and sated, largely adolescent audience that demands more outrage. Extravagance, however, is severely constricted by the ecosystem of morality that governs American television: the small packs of the divinely-directed who prey on the legislators (who must camouflage themselves with forceful positions on uncontroversial issues in order to be reelected) and the corporations (whose advertisements feed television and therefore must attract as many possible potential customers, repelling none). Sex, on MTV, in this tension of attraction and repulsion, has essentially reached its limit of innuendo. To maintain its allure of the forbidden, of taboos being broken, and to keep the kids from changing the channel, the station must rely on equally fascinating, if less appealing, bodily functions—aspects of the body to which the moralists are oddly indifferent.

[A digression: In the U.S., moral issues, particularly concerning the "corruption" of youth, are inextricably entwined with physical health. The 19th century was the era of apostles of strenuous exercise as a means for keeping youth from bad thoughts and deeds. (Today, of course, the muscled body is presumed to have more frequent contact with other, equally muscled, bodies.) In the 1950s, the main corrupter of children was believed—thanks to a bestselling book called *Seduction of the Innocent* by Dr. Frederick Wertham—to be comic books. This intersected with the polio epidemic to create a myth that the disease was being spread by comics; there were mass burnings around the country. More recently, the morally enlightened have ascribed the spread of a virus to the "pornography" of television and popular music. Conversely, whenever youth is involved, health issues are treated as moral questions, most notably in the cases of AIDS and drugs.]

The more complicated explanation for this manifestation of the half-digested is that ever since youth detached itself from adult society, shortly after the Second World War, and became a separate but parallel culture, it has been a reliable indicator of the society at large. Its exaggerated responses and actions are not only canaries in our coal mines, but often extreme versions of what are or will soon be norms. Vomit has become an adolescent preoccupation, not only as entertainment, but as obsession: a prevailing psychological disorder among teenage girls in the technological countries. Bulimia is a response that is both violent and reasonable: In this society, what else can one do but throw up?

For the last twenty-five years, those who are not poor in the First World have been under siege by armies of production. In the arts

alone, the record stores carry hundreds of thousands of CDs; the video store on my corner has ten thousand films; my local television has seventy channels; the *Directory of American Poets* lists some seven thousand poets, all reputedly alive and publishing; there's a web site that sells a million new books and another with four million out-of-print ones; the number of art galleries, theater and dance and music companies in any large city inspires one to stay home and contemplate the void. The other day I wanted some information on a writer who died ten years ago: the library had two hundred full-length critical studies and thousands of articles; an Internet search listed 7,000 web sites where the writer's name appeared. I decided to direct my curiosity elsewhere, and tried to remember someone who had been completely forgotten.

One result of this excess of all things is that if you are a fanatic of any given subject—let us say, poetry or movies—it is more than likely that your fellow enthusiast has not read the same books or seen the same films. You have nothing to talk about together. This lack of a shared knowledge or a common ground—not of a "tradition," but of a sense of the contemporary, of what is being produced right now, to advocate, modify or oppose—is unprecedented. It is perhaps the one thing, beyond the gadgets, that is genuinely new.

This means, in the arts, that it is nearly impossible to have any impact. The first edition of *The Waste Land* was only five hundred copies, but it transformed poetry in various languages, and was known, whether adulated or rejected, by all readers of modern poetry. This has become unimaginable: the last book to have an immediate international effect on literature at large, *One Hundred Years of Solitude,* occurred thirty years ago, just before this Age of Proliferation.

It also means, for the maker of art, that to produce implies a conscious decision not to consume, if only momentarily—to arrogantly proclaim one's right or need to ceremoniously place one's tiny little leaf in this rain forest. In the general population, the feeling of helplessness amidst the multiplication of humanity and its products has, among other things, led to the creation of group identities, which are not only assertions of community and self in the collapsing of traditional societal units, but also a way, however inadvertent, to keep one's consumerism on a human scale. Religious affiliation, in its stricter forms, neatly parcels much of the world into acceptable and taboo. Monolithic advocates of ethnic or sexual identities can happily concern themselves with the work of confederates and remain unashamedly oblivious of others. Intended—in their constructive aspects—to erase the worst forms of provincialism, group identities seek the refuge of a new provincialism in a cosmopolitanized world: a dream of an orderly

and focused life, where one knows what one wants to discover and know.

The rest of us can only stuff ourselves and vomit and stuff ourselves again. This is not the banquet vomiting of the Romans, which was a kind of potlatch: a demonstration of one's wealth or power through the greatest possible display of waste. This is a guilty vomiting, the vomiting of a bulimic, who may well be the emblem of the age.

In the psychological studies, the bulimia of teenage girls is generally seen as a self-destructive response to perceptions of inadequacy *(I am stupid, ugly, fat);* shame *(my family is poor; I've been sexually abused);* and failure *(I am bad at school, making friends, meeting boys. . .);* as well as a strategy of avoidance *(. . . therefore I won't try).* With a slight translation, these are the feelings of nearly everyone in the hyper-production of the West: *I have consumed too many things; I can't possibly keep up with all the things to consume; I'm always consuming the wrong thing; I'm too stupid or uninformed to know which thing to consume; I've consumed too many of the wrong things; there are too many things so I won't consume any. . .* The Western consumer lives in the guilt of excess, the dizziness of choices, the identification of self through one's selections (in current spoken American, one way to say "I like spaghetti" is "I am a spaghetti person"), the doubts about one's self as seen through one's selections, the continual belief that one has made the wrong choice (brand of VCR, color of wall paint, sofa, lover or spouse) when there are so many others.

The allure of the mass media has always been the presentation of what we are not and would like to be: leading lives of wealth, adventure, and passion. The images of vomiting that appear as one nervously clicks the remote control are not only there as bizarre novelties to make us pause at a certain channel and its commercials. They are there because we wish we could clear a space, make some room, expunge all the half-digested matter in our brains, stop for a moment the interminable consumption and its attendant anxieties, know again the feeling of hunger and the feeling of satisfaction. We look at people throwing up because we wish we could throw it all up—including these images of people throwing up.

# JACKSON MAC LOW

## SWIFT-FLOWING WATER WHERE BALES OF HAY EXPLODE {Forties 136}

Swíft-flowing wáter plenty póor in a sprawling vílla
fáiling went
with-a-red - rócking-chair a-yéar-before-we-died
of low-self-estéem
when a passive mýope bewailing-a-tendentious
lack-of-experimentátion
read Ovid-in-an-óld tweed cáp pouring-óut-an Italian soul
that skípped some days over the company's
veiling cascading wavy líne
in the mood for a mouthful of péas

Patiently swallowing mémories próper
or nót she-didn't-understand
an-idiom-of self-absorbed-fáscism-when ready for béd
or snippets
that worried a flattering féar into ánger since her náme
is God of Wár
but now she could go for the first tíme alóne
in a black embroidered dréss in which
she suffered-from-the-nárcissism of-her-áncestry
aware of being the óther

Peripherally-seeing-réd when eating bonbons
filled with chérry flesh
she was as Lady Caroline said mád bád and
dángerous-to-knów
like a beckoning pólar bear in-a-unfamiliar-córner
or a Neánderthal in gold lamé who's rented-an-Italian
búlldozer born of an objet d'árt's inhuman necéssity that
of a fossil

caught in a layer of shále

Clutching a baby's - héad confused by turquoise
cónfidences and cónscience
protécted-by-a speeding síster wronged by nuts and bolts
and nóthing no
wórse habit-than-her-ówn or the daily mediocre-wróng
that álways exists
in maláise or Maláysia her loving generous víbes
were broken by a ríft in-the-coróna-of-a realistic pálimpsest
perceived by a fly on the céiling
mellifluously emptying éverything

Sitting-at-a-desk by himsélf as a temporary dóor is
clósed at-the-periphery
his sight is hárdened by angles sliced by
compléx fixations-on-refléction
and by interchanging geneálogies never assúred
by heaven or hóuses
lifelessly turned-into-unstoppable-stáples cast into
the-explicated-ócean they-fall-ínto-it revérsely
like a schematic list of námes
proscribed by murderous prómises

Happy víolence casts its shadow-on-eléctrifying translátions
the shape and size of póstcards as-álien-as-a
hundred lunging bánkrupts
and unreconstructed álligators discomforted by hierarchies
over and over oppressed by abstráct-transitional-bíases
vertically extending old-time cookware
shaped like doughnuts
or more persísting tori

White déserts in milkweed moonlight froth
like the melted múrmuring
heard at súnset when mángoes extend the horízon
and bóoks arise where simple respónses reign
in gráviton - dreams
passed at every step by absurdly naked pearly flésh

beset and trapped by series of rélays blínd
as-catastrophic-músic overdetermining distant spéech
in an ill-at-ease-córnfield

Transplanting kídneys with high good húmor
in a well - endowed lándscape
overcharged with-géntleness-and flooding vénom
vást as appéarance
incalculable-ímages-recur robótically throughout
a summer dáy
féared by fossilized metaphysícians blínded against
quotidian síght and caressed by folded hands and idiot
marionéttes who clutch their chésts
where bales of háy explode

*Caesural spaces = durations of silence or prolongations of final phonemes:*
4 letter spaces [ ] = 1 unstressed syllable;
8 letter spaces [ ] = 1 stressed syllable or beat;
none occurs between typographical lines;
breath pauses at verse-line ending ad lib.

Nonorthographic acute accents indicate stress, not vowel quality.
Each hyphenated compound is read as one extended word:
somewhat more rapidly than other words, but never hurried.
[ - ] indicates a slowed-down compound.
Indented lines continue verse lines begun above them.

New York:22 May 1994; 24–30 June, 25 July 1997;
20–24 February 1998

# E. Cameron Scott

## TWO POEMS

### IDAHO

East and west, dry and wet, are cast
north to south. There. The south
deep in dogma, amber waves of it,
like a golden dog with wavy fur. Bounding
about it resembled love simply
because it was radiant. Again that
refraction. Until he bounded up
and wolfed a sweet bread whole, leaving
memory of teeth on the fingers.
Then snorted around expecting
more, so much so he would dig it out.
Regardless. I don't think he found it;
so it was metaphor, then—
it dogged me for days, its displacements
so real. The unmetaphoric formulating
a response, hangdog again. That in another
place—I lapse back to old contours as if
they would frame the familiar. Loving
dogma; similitude. Count the lakes,
climate zones—*dry as a bone*
or *raining cats and dogs.* East, West, North, South—
Still, was the symbol gold or was gold buried
niggardly, fractious? Chiefly, they've unburied
a nugget on the tongue. Knobby circular
root; a swirl of border swirling still; colored
river to comanche, who counts climate zones.
All knocking about in Hell's Canyon

and Craters of the Moon, along
with those for whom names intrude *(dogs and cats),*
so casual. This bowed mirror
invents the original, something it is
not, split, offered, overflowing. It holds itself up
as unbecoming, I travelling backwards
in earnest, road map, street sign, speed limit,
the shortest distance.

## NORTH CAROLINA

It just kindles the skin, leaning in.
I wide-angle and bloat, all self, surface–
a filth's colossus and thankful–
fleshing out warm welcome at the edge of form:

lithe unlike winter, gangly shadows
are late-breaking and sanguine. Blithely take to air,
coast across the element.

Hear heat as it floats
and reeks–coming on like a fond
future. River of washout slips
over hill, moves more ground-
brick than dark vitamin beneath
a husk of factory.

So much accident to keep afloat:
the free surface of translucence

says something of the molten
horizon, as do the day or two life-
spans of bugs that crowd in like Wall Street
traders. The brimming

body only breathes
its thick spectrum of allergy, rehearses rote
in dual dimensions, pushes past.

*Even tobacco tastes good now,*
*sweet brown bite and ghost—*

Bone-flower, see yourself in curly bud:

I—that would be in state, a body bag
bulbous and out of the root-cellar—
desire so cavernous and full
on the tongue as there is so much land,
so dense, and as much depth of tarmac
between here and any distance.

*Send me your poor,*
*your huddled masses. . . .*

# TINA ROTENBERG

## JERUSALEM STORY

"If I am not very much mistaken, I am coming closer. It is as though the spiritual battle were taking place in a clearing somewhere in the woods. I make my way into the woods, find nothing, and out of weakness immediately hasten out again; often as I leave the woods I hear, or think I hear, the clashing weapons of that battle. Perhaps the eyes of the warriors are seeking me through the darkness of the woods, but I know so little of them, and that little is deceptive." May 27, 1914 Franz Kafka

### 1. The Vise of Prayer

The city of cities, where light alters its face a hundred times a day. Pearl grey dawn yields to noon's beating sun on yellowed stone and passes into pink and orange dusk. Retreating light unveils a kaleidoscope of colored tide pools washing across the surface of Jerusalem.

Here she could find her family and lose it. Here she discovered the remains of Christ and Mohammed. Prayers encircled the city in a vise, holding its peoples together; and splitting them apart, each jostling to sound their voice in the city's story.

She walked aimlessly through all the city's changes to find and possess it, to be possessed by it, her blueprint for future travel.

O city of holy light
moon bathing a man
standing naked and enormous
silhouetted
in the darkness
at the meeting

of the roads
jacking off in an
isolated
ecstacy.

To fall in love with a city was no longer lonely. Visions startled her awake. She discovered family at fruit and vegetable stands, waiting for buses next to elderly women with multi-colored scarves covering their heads, walking briskly past construction sights where Arab workers shouted at her excitedly, mistaking her for an Arab woman.

Would it be enough simply to feel the streets underneath her feet, and speak the language as though she had been born into it? What did it mean to be a Jew here? Why adhere to a code that compressed her imagination into a tight wad of suffocated fire?

* * * * * *

She had been elated for weeks and swiftly dispatched B. for his misery could not accommodate her delirium. She had made preparations to leave the country, sure that her time was now. Happiness was so close she could feel it coming upon her like a gale.

(August 2, 1991 [Anger] is a comparatively benign way of discharging bad feelings—it prevents more destructive expressions of anger such as: destruction of property, personal violence, crime, libel, trying to destroy someone's career behind their back, etc.)

At the airport, seven in the morning, Israeli time, she waited for hours in line for customs inspection with travellers from Egypt, Argentina, Russia, Morocco. After about an hour, she spotted Y. walking quickly toward her. They embraced and at that precise moment she knew that she had made it.

*Flight of ideas...or thoughts...racing* all the way home to Jerusalem. As they reached the part where the land starts to rise amidst scrub bushes and pines, her anticipation intensified along with her attraction to Y. He drove quickly, swerving round corners, climbing further and further into the mountains. Then all at once, coming round the last corner, the city unrolled at her feet.

They put her in a tiny room adjacent to the kitchen. All night, lying awake, wanting him, and too close to this shifting boundary of consciousness, in the fluctuating darkness, to stem the flood of her thoughts.

She sat next to the wall, feeling homely and alone, watching the dancers move across the floor, her eyes riveted upon one couple. How beautiful the woman was, and how perfectly her husband, who was a little shorter than her, with an interesting East European Jewish face, danced with her, holding her in his arms as though he was born that way. She wished she might glow like that, be loved by a man like that. In her isolation, she felt a sadness that their joy eclipsed.

The next day, early in the morning, Y. drove her to Tel Aviv and dropped her at the immigration office. She spent hours moving from office to office, clerk to clerk, and soon forgot why she was there. Caught up in a parade of people who entered the building, waited in line, and then left. Clerks spoke rudely, customers became irate and moved on to other lines. The passage of time blurred, incommensurate with the task at hand.

She'd find him in one of these myriad offices, she was sure for wasn't he the one to give her a visa since only he could give her so much more? All that was necessary was for her to wait until he found her. He must know she was there looking for him.

(June 30, 1991 You know, P., I don't know any more if I should say something or say nothing.)

Late in the afternoon, the offices closed and she boarded a bus that dropped her near his work place. When she arrived, she was told that he had just left. They were very sorry, but he had surmised that she had returned to Jerusalem on her own. She became frantic. She was losing him. She ran out into the streets and came to a kiosk where a lot of people milled around—mothers with children, buying groceries, men smoking cigarettes lazily on the corner, soldiers with Uzis slung over their shoulders. She climbed inside a cab with several people bound for Jerusalem. Next to her was a young Arab who put his hand on her leg. She let him kiss her. Perhaps, she thought, he is the one; he must, she thought, be Y. in yet another form.

The driver stopped when they reached the center of the city and asked her for her fare. She told him that she had no money. He began to yell at her, gesticulating wildly, and she watched him with astonishment, for hadn't this ride been foreordained? Her new lover paid for her and she took him to her apartment where they took off all their clothes and fucked for hours.

She was in the arms of an ancient seagod who had arisen from the ocean to grapple with her in the disguise of love. He gave her white powder laid out on a knife to inhale to make her submit to the frantic, urgent quality of his love-making, so completely detached from the realm of intimacy, relegated to some ancient ritual repeating and repeating the act of love.

## 2. Signature

She was out in the streets, sure she must be on his trail. He would not leave her, forget her. He was there at every stop sign. She knew he would find her once and for all.

She descended the stairs and entered the narrow church in the Arab quarter of the city. A sign that said Church of Gethsemane. Should she believe it? At the entrance, she was assaulted by hundreds of lit candles and paintings of saints on the walls. He was in this place, with its dark garden set along the barrier dividing East and West. He too had walked here, her invisible redeemer, in an agony of temptation. He was watching over her, bringing her across the gulf that separated them. Assuming the posture of suplication, she prayed and then forgot her prayers.

She was in an apartment next to a dirt road with several men talking in a language she did not understand. She didn't know how far she travelled that night in the jeep, entering the hut where she made love with the driver for hours before he took her elsewhere and then he was gone.

She approached the scaffolding of a huge house where a man worked into the night. He was the one she was seeking. He held her in his arms, high off the ground, and she wrapped her legs around him.

She gave away her necklaces. She was in the shower with two men fondling her. She was traversing green hills in the darkness with four men. They took her down to a bunker. He pulled down her pants and fucked her. As she cried, he took her aside and promised to marry her. They stood together beneath a canopy of leaves.

* * * * *

She remembered drawing A's face, uncovering the hidden points of pressure that she marked with a pencil, and how slowly but unmistakeably the figure of a cross, a crucifix emerged in the invisible lines that connected these points, and she saw him, in that second, forever torn between two poles. That sign, right at the temple, marked, until eternity by laments withheld and yet visible to those who can bear to see and witness.

(Such suffering, we'll never know, slowly descending the mountains we climbed like goats in the snow.

We were all there. And you were far down the mountain, beyond the spot that I could see when I got there, and so we were lost to each other the entire day.)

She remembered later that she was shocked by what she drew, and yet she recognized it as the sign of his election, that sign whose incarnation she was seeking and always thought, ultimately, to find in him.

There was a war in his face, right where he perceived himself. No matter how she yearned for him, there was always a part of him that was disappearing into pain, regret, denial, and the recognition that he would always inhabit a fool's hell.

(April 27, 1991 You won't find anyone who's trying harder than I am to come to terms with my bad habits. Do you want to help me change them by example or do you want to walk away from me?)

He clamoured up the stairs and when he reached the top he came to a small door which was locked. He reached into his pocket and fumbled for the key, then bent down to insert the key into the lock. When it fit, a tiny silver light flashed from the

key hole and, when he gently pushed the door open, he saw an empty garret filled with cobwebs and dust, old dolls with their heads pulled off and a broken rocking chair. In this room he found that peace he had prayed for so assiduously for years. He need not descend the stairs again, because those stairs were gone. All the climbing and all that useless effort. Yet it wasn't really useless, he reminded himself, for now he was here. He had finally deserted the world below him that had tormented him so completely.

### 3. Allure of the Sky

Indigo dome, hung with stars.
Circling the track, celestials close
as damp air. Never tiring, never dropping
a penchant for delirium.
The silver bay to the west; black forests of firs to the east.

Unimpeded by fog, the descent from the mountain.

She shivers alone in a sleeveless pearl dress.

Flagrantly proclaiming her wedding day, in a crepuscular haze, she detects the distant ringing of bells.

Divested of obstacles encountered at every corner, she will find him in hiding wherever she is led. The sun marks the hour, rousing her senses, attuned to the bushes spawning tiny red berries.

Under footfall, the stillness subsumes.

Down the trail, between broken-windowed houses. Small voices echo hollowly: the demise of blind children haunting an abandoned school.

Like a beacon, he gathers her in from turbulent travels. She could sail into his orbit easily, ripe with desire.

(Do you know sleeplessnesss driving your body?

Fatigue arrives only with the disappointment of never locating you in the haunts of the night.

With the allure of the sky, and the sun and moon enamoured of my body, I could chase you forever.

Still, I can see you everywhere: in the turn of a cheek, in the silence waiting to break the light off a face, bewildered before each quarrying gaze.)

> Enveloped in white, the moon dissipates and vanishes with the dawn. Air lightens visibly and other clues displace her resplendent guide.

(I have always found you lost to me.

You have been between my breasts before your birth, since your death, and in between.

If I look behind me, you will be following me.

I am apart from you; and yet, loving you, I am most certainly close to you, even though I cannot feel your breath upon my mouth.)

> She enters a grove and crosses a bridge. Over a hill, amidst tables and benches, never seen before, though she had been here for all of time.
>
> Yoghurt and little cakes wrapped in cellophane, sandwiches and soft drinks.
>
> A feast for the forlorn.
>
> No street waif, garnering coins from hand-outs; empty bottles, pulled in shopping carts.
>
> Drinking coffee slowly in roadside restaurants, and then disappearing, without the check.

After midnight, she suckles her appetite wandering through supermarkets, sniffing vegetables and potato chips, strolling past milk and cheese; racing and stopping, turning corners speedily, she stuffed her jacket in an empty cardboard box in the soap section of the store.

* * * * *

It was daylight and she saw a tall policeman on her left sharing a sidewalk with her in downtown Jerusalem.

She was in a room, seated on a bed, and he was sitting next to her, embarrassed and amazed by the movements of her hands. Her hands told him of her love for him—the message she reserved for every man she encountered at these times.

Years before she had drawn the hands of a man who was a musician, and she called the drawing "the musician." He came to visit her regularly, and before long she fell in love with him, but refrained from seducing him.

* * * * *

Sitting on a window ledge

tiny hand movements conduct the lesson

This is her proper stoop: to displace the one
dispensing discourse
to a crowd of faces

the dance of hands attracts distress

Gently the policeman places his large hand on her arm and leads her where she must go, to be grilled, digested and spewed.

"Her chief complaint: nothing is wrong."

Lightly she draws a flower and a face on small pieces of yellow paper with a line that trembles.

(Imprisoned by writing, the poet cannot navigate the hours in one spot. Nevertheless, pinned to the chair, she must rest, write, rewrite, and

then eliminate. Conscious incarceration in a time fit for fleeing.)

* * * * *

Her hands became white birds with large wings that dipped and sailed in meaningful configurations. He had been there before, years before, as she burrowed in strange basements and crawl spaces underneath houses, calling for him, knowing he was just a bit ahead of her, signalling to her, adoring her, facing her image in a mirror in a bathroom at a gas station, down on all fours, like a tiger she'd seen displayed on a billboard above the highway.

They gave her an injection in her hip and locked her in a cell. She lay on a cot in the middle of the cell and reached out for the ceiling where there was a hole through which he peered, watching her, wanting her. Very slowly she masturbated for him. She called his name in a whisper, over and over.

A cage made of wire, with no place to piss or shit. She banged on the door and called for someone to open it. No one came.

She was drawn to a pale young Englishman. Every so often he disappeared into the room adjacent to hers with an older fatter woman with long black hair and large breasts. He refused to sleep with her and told her she was a slut because she would do it with anyone. Continuing to think of him, she tried to crawl into a bed with a stranger in the men's bedroom but he pushed her away like a bad dream.

Only N. came to visit her, dressed smartly in clothes that fit tightly over her slightly overweight body. By then she had forgotten about her desire for Y., for she now wanted L. and P., and even though L. wouldn't have her, she fucked P. on the floor by the showers with all the others standing round.

On one of her visits, N. asked her: "Do you think that they are taking good care of you here?" She answered, "Yes. This is the best place. Here they leave us alone." That night they took them to a big square where there was singing and dancing. She sat beside L. and his lover and beat time with the music. There were lit torches and a deep blue blackness spread across the warp and weft of the sky.

## 4. Companion

Wearing his hat, suit and tie, elegant and understated, he breached the margins of her fantasy. He flew across continents to find her, wherever she might be locked up, mistreated, overmedicated, or casually raped. He always walked erect and purposeful, a little too fast, keeping his emotions contained, while he acted with speed and decisiveness.

He was her most faithful companion, her only real guardian spirit, for he did not simply hover ahead of her, leading her into false and dangerous hopes. He felt no burning need to understand her. He disentangled her life with purpose, energy and conviction. He was never offended by her behaviour and could tolerate his own apprehensions about where in God's name she had been. Or perhaps he merely experienced a failure of imagination; he simply assumed that she had remained within the territory of the tolerable.

What had he said that freed her from that hell hole? They served her papers and refused to let her immigrate. All that rhetoric about Jews not being Jews unless they made *aliyah.* But their most devoted "elements" were discarded and driven out. She had to face it—she was an undesirable alien—33, unmarried, and out of her head.

(September 25, 1985 I was used to being considered brilliant from early school days and it is a let down to discover that I am not as brilliant as I think I am.)

He packed up her clothes and paid off the landlady for the trouble she'd caused by leaving the door to the apartment open when she left.

There was a garden adjacent to his hotel and a path which led to the old city. Promptly at midnight, restless and intent upon finding her beloved, she prevailed upon him to leave the safety of his room. She could not bear the floral patterns of the wallpaper and the bedspread, or the expensive furniture tastefully and anonymously arranged. She must wander with the night hours; implicate herself with the moon, whose light allured her far more than the artificial lamps in their rooms.

* * * * *

The sand under her feet leads to watery images of damaged loveliness, breaking against pebbles, moved by abandon. Waves lap her ankles. She moves towards an alternate form of bliss.

(We forget to suffer our own betrayals until, too late, we remember.)

With the aid of her escorts, she would find him again, and he would take her to him. *No easy trick, difficult/even for the experienced stranger. . . for some have entertained angels unawares.* The lake sang. The wind sent pulses through her hair. "Deeper," the water spoke, "blessings in suffusion. It is not the ground you walk that shimmers with company."

(They never leave us alone if we stray from human witnesses into the upper echelons of the night.)

* * * * *

She held his hand, as she always had when they ventured forth in a city that was new to him. He felt a calm descend upon him, as though, for that moment and perhaps for all of time, he had stepped out of his own life, his constraints, for her sake.

She made her way towards the Arab *shuk* through narrow unpaved streets, lined on each side by closed blue doors. Completely deserted now, in contrast to the crowds of tourists during the day and Arab men busy in their booths with wares to sell to anyone who cared to bargain for a rug, a dress, vegetables, a ceramic pot.

She reassured him repeatedly that she knew where she was going, though she could not have said what she knew, but her mind was replete with promptings.

He slipped and caught himself. Then he pleaded with her piteously: "I am an old man. . . sixty years old. . . are you sure you know where you are taking me?" Was she sure, or just determined (like A's face, blue in death, dressed in a suit with a ring forced onto the fourth finger of his left hand)?

She cajoled him. She comforted him. What she sought was just a little further. It would be worth it. He too would soon understand why she insisted on this walk. What she wanted was just beyond the next blue door. To turn and return to the same spot, and find it different every time, safely forgotten, barely recognized.

So engrossed in discovering what was calling her, she was barely cognizant of his company now. They walked further and further into a welter of scarcely discernable, labyrinthine streets. He did not protest again; only held her hand tightly. She didn't dare to look at him for she couldn't afford, after going so far, to see what she knew she would see in his face.

When she reached the end of an alley they had not seen before (or so she thought), they came at last to a door, but it was shut and bolted. She retraced her steps, more quickly now, down a street that, in the darkness, resembled all the other streets they'd seen. But this time they emerged into a large open square with booths draped with white sheets and bare bulbs hanging above tables loaded with prayer books. At each booth, there were men assiduously praying.

*(The patient denied auditory or visual hallucinations, suicidal or homicidal ideation. She was unable to do abstractions and was somewhat bizarre in her answer. To the abstraction "One should not carry all their eggs in one basket," she responded "What gives birth is more decisive than basketweaving.")*

When they left behind the tangle of streets, claustrophobic and afraid, she sat down, draped herself in a white shawl, and began to read from one of the prayerbooks arranged haphazardly in a heap on the table before her. She read fervently in a language she knew without understanding a word. He tried once again to distract her from her purpose, to bring her back to the hotel. Urgently, she told him she wished to stay and pray all night. He reminded her of her promise, and, at that moment, she raised her eyes to his face and saw the fervour of his concern, the passion of his protective love, and she allowed herself to be led away from that company of men who barely registered her disappearance. The force that prevailed upon her was that power she had been looking back at in the

resurrection of her dreadful desire to immolate herself on the threshold of prayer.

* * * * *

The next day she disappeared, foraging for clothes in a large ramshackle house with many small rooms littered with books, underwear, clothing, dolls and money, attempting, all the more intently, to find her own place. As she was assembling her wardrobe, never doubting for a moment that it was hers, a young woman with short curly black hair came into the room and asked angrily:

"What do you think you're doing in my room?"

She did not answer, but quickly pulled out a worn yellow bathrobe from the closet, threw the clothes on it, and wrapped them up. She said nothing to the intruder, even seemed not to notice her. The woman got angrier,

"If you don't get out of here, I'm going to call the police."

Then the girl smiled at her vaguely and held out her hand,

"My name is Anna. What's yours? Ahhh, we are sisters. You know what I mean. Your name must be Miri. Of course. How could you leave me so long? I knew you weren't dead."

In response, the woman just stared, and began to exhibit a quiet nervousness, looking helplessly from Anna's face to the pile of clothing on the floor.

She came to herself outside the house. She was not certain how she had got there. Where was that girl who had accused her of stealing? She shrugged and thought vaguely to herself that days were like that now. Places became indistinguishable from one another in her mind. But then a sudden memory would hit her—like the bunkers with those four strange men. She saw again the man who hurt her. Like the time she agreed to date a skinny black guy who kept staring at her in a cafe. She went out with him to a bar where blacks and whites freely mingled and she was proud to be in a place like that. He didn't talk to her that night, but at the end of the evening she was with him in her

room on her bed and he had pulled down her pants and shocked her by fucking her while she was lying on her stomach in a daze, filled with romantic fantasies about a man with whom she had hardly spoken.

So this passage from outside to inside and back again outside left crucial gaps in her memory. Like lights coming on in different rooms without the agency of a human hand and then unpredictably going out again without her putting in her two cents about whether she would live in the light or in the dark.

Shadow memories that concealed themselves in one or another cavity of her brain, that lit up at unpredictable moments, and then left her, bereft and humiliated, all at once and forever.

**Herbstlicht**

Studying the photos
hungrily
she traces lives
embedded
in her body:
fragments
from an exploded
bomb.

A policeman found her and brought her to meet him as he came walking briskly down the driveway that led to the back of the hotel. When he spotted her, returning with her uniformed escort, he yelled to her, joyfully waving his arms.

Disappearance was her way, and her way out; the key she needed to unlock her sudden escapades. Even when she was found and persuaded to return to safety, she still harbored within herself the freedom to vanish again.

(December 23, 1990 When in a room with 20 people, unless you are the speaker, you are watching 20 people. On average, only one person is watching you. I am not so special that I have spectators.)

June 1997

# BRIAN SCHORN

## TWO POEMS

### CRACKED SEEDS AND AFTERWARDS

Shovel that carcass through the corner of
a tear drop. Lay it the overlord
seeing the whole matter hang to a head sheet. Bed of barking
dogs to bite the night through.

His fall: the sleeping want of a fall, buttoned up
tie bright fall. See his shirt becoming
bull's eyes, eagle eyes at the first opportunity. Make the left
arm
go away to feathers and light-weight bones. OK, fly the
cloudy
dirt from the cornea hitch, let go of him
going home till his legs drop.

"See, I told you," he says, "These are my lips not moving."

## LINEN TO LIVE FOR?

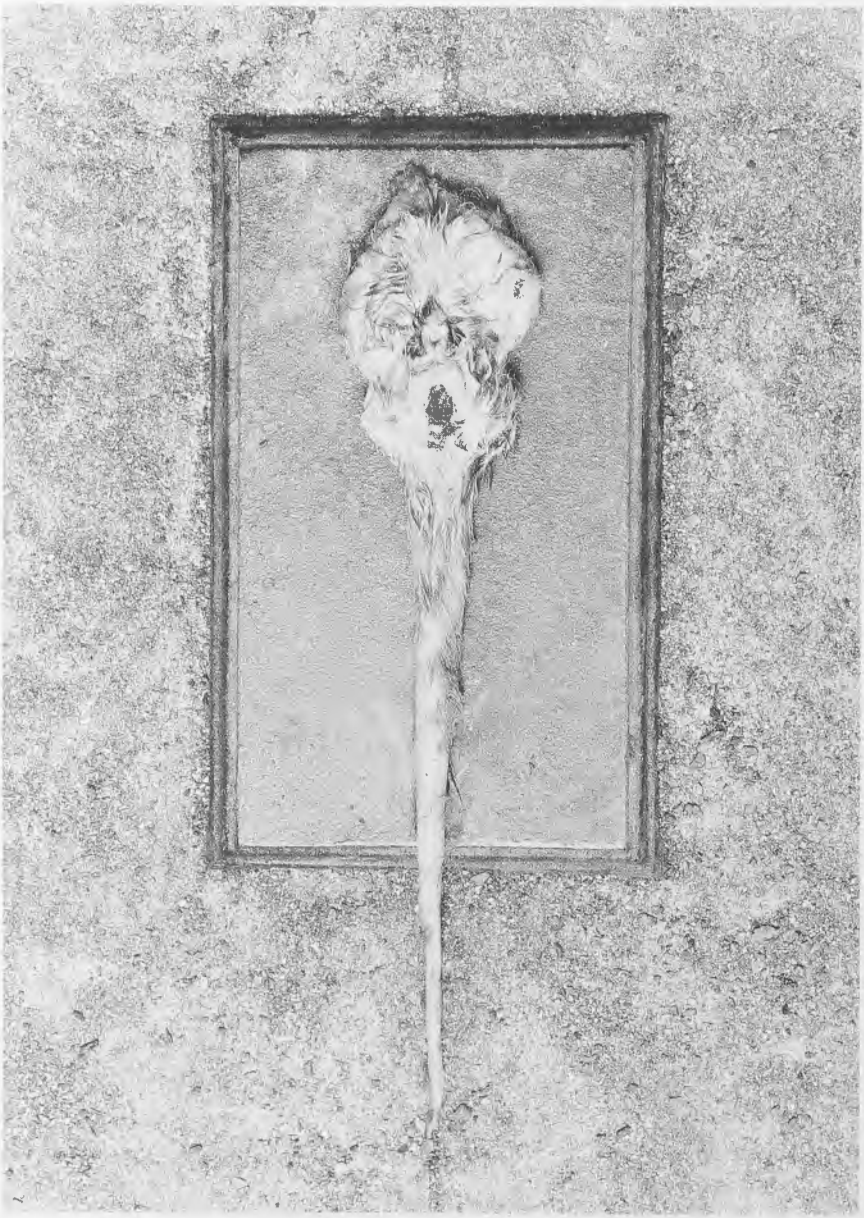
He licks his hair like a bonfire broken out into happy
bottles on their way home from work. Happy here the man
with
lightning through his lip. High-carbon
steel sitting pretty. Stick yourself an overgrown angel with
middle-finger cramps. Hang on twilight till your dimples come
home buried milk and honey.
Cherish the armor convincing concussions flattest of all.
Clench the very
piece of his pants to carry
on like soldiers' medals. Blink. Oink! Beaten
off the bayonet juicy as rose buds. Eyeballs continue
everyday barstools.

He moves in order to harden the stone in order to
bust the statue he has become. Cracked-off
arm bottles lying around lazy
spilling, "Pull on us like infinitely broken kite string. Have a
ball and while you're at it swing that
smelly death wrench."

Barrel so high so happy fingers explain their whereabouts.
Shit yea, let's play with him candelabras
then fist his skull. Oh honey,
see the uniform having freshly pressed lines.

# Brian Schorn

## FIVE PHOTOGRAPHS



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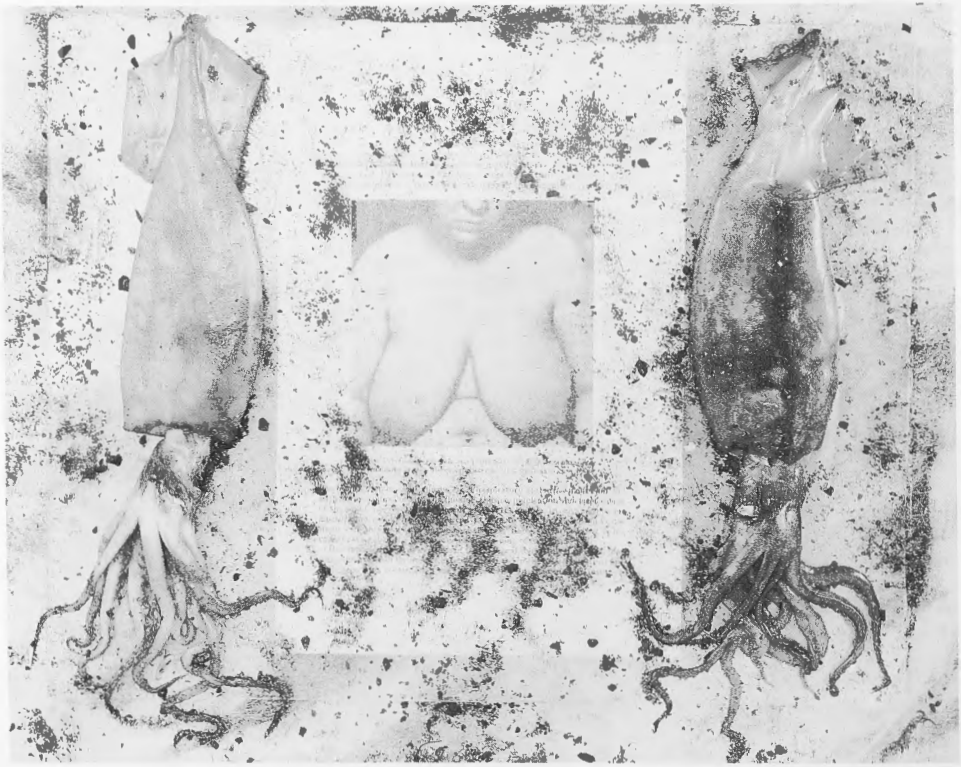

# ADRIENNE RICH

## RUSTED LEGACY

Imagine a city where nothing's
forgiven  your deed adheres
to you like a scar, a tattoo  but almost everything's
forgotten  deer flattened leaping a highway for food
the precise reason for the shaving of the confused girl's head
the small boys' punishing of the frogs
—a city memory-starved but intent on retributions
Imagine the architecture  the governance
the men and the women in power
—tell me if it is not true you still
live in that city.

Imagine a city partitioned  divorced from its hills
where temples and telescopes used to probe the stormy
codices
a city brailling through fog
thicket and twisted wire
into dark's velvet dialectic
sewers which are also rivers
art's unchartered aquifers  the springhead

sprung open in civic gardens left unlocked at night
I finger the glass beads I strung and wore
under the pines while the arrests were going on
(transfixed from neck to groin I wanted to save what I could)
They brought trays with little glasses of cold water
into the dark park  a final village gesture
before the villages were gutted.

They were trying to save what they could
—tell me if this is not the same city.

I have forced myself to come back like a daughter
required to put her mother's house in order
whose hands need terrible gloves to handle
the medicinals the disease packed in those linens
Accomplished criminal I've been but
can I accomplish justice here? Tear old wedding sheets
into cleaning rags? Faithless daughter
like stone but with water pleating across
Let water be water let stone be stone
Tell me is this the same city.

This I—must she, must she lie scabbed with rust
crammed with memory in a place
of little anecdotes no one left
to go around gathering the full dissident story?
Rusting her hands and shoulders stone her lips
yet leaching down from her eyesockets tears
—for one self only? each encysts a city.

1997

# CHRIS SIA

## SCORPIO MOON

*in memory of Sprout*

I guess I'll never know
where Antares is in the summer sky,
most likely doesn't make its bright
blood appearance until late October,
when all the swans have left the lake
and all the homeless crazies
have all gone south—to Florida.
Since your death,
I've put some extra time
on my prison bunk
thinking about the difference
five years can make in the scattering
of these once closely-associated lives.
Years ago,
beneath the sooty terraced roofs of Katmandu,
I walked through the open market
fingering my prayer beads,
taking photographs of small boys
who wore my sunglasses,
who took me to a temple
and smeared ochre on my third eye
while tears containing the wholeness of life
fell into the sweet ancient dust.
You and I stayed in a cheap lodge
named after the Hindu god of *preservation,*
the only vacancy besides the glaze in your eyes,
that look that reminded me of Narayan,
the heroin addict I befriended one day
on the streets looking for hashish,
the way he nodded out,

slumped against the wall of a temple,
red ember of oblivion glowing between his
[fingers
while the curfew strangled
the city into brittle submission.
Would the burning ever awaken you?
The harbingers made their subtle
[appearances,
like crows gathering on a telephone wire,
but I ignored them and ended up getting
[ripped off
by you both, leaving
for Benares alone, financially
and spiritually bankrupt. *Heavy testimony,*
when you leave someone on the other side of the world,
when you come home and still feel
as if you left a vital organ of your body
in a basket, at the temple
where the ferocious guardians are awaiting your return.
You've ripped me off again.
I'm left with this unspoken apology; I'm left
with this furnace of unrequited love,
holding the police ribbon that cordons the
[crime scene–
the metaphor of our lives lived outside the law.
Did they empty your pockets
and throw you down the stairs after you went
[blue,
after the convulsions, after life had
[squeezed
its last tremor
from the armor of your body, fragile
scorpion crushed beneath destiny's boot?
The tragedy's not your death,
but the simple plain fact
that you foresaw all this,
actually mentioned it casually over a morning beer–
*like it was the fucking weather–*
then turned toward the moon,

moon over the brown rivers of Bangkok,
moon that raced down Champs Elysees
[on LSD
moon reflected in the glass-still waters of the Ganges
moon that smiled upon the mountains
of Big Sur and Santa Cruz
moon that teased a Balinese volcano
moon somewhere over Manhattan
peering in a window–
as you pushed the needle in.


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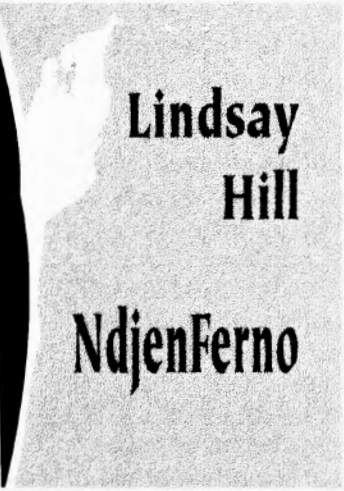


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# ANDRE BRETON

## MY HEART THROUGH WHICH HER HEART HAS PASSED: Poems of Love and Desperation, 1926–1931

*(Tr. from the French and preface by Mark Polizzotti)*

### Preface

These eleven poems none of which has previously appeared in English, and only two of which were published by the author, chronicle the most emotionally trying period in André Breton's life. They are in some ways a disparate lot, ranging from the purely automatic to the carefully structured, from prose to free verse, but each reflects a facet of the two unhappy loves—one idealized and unrequited, the other tortured and doomed—that occupied Breton's heart in the early years of Surrealism. When one sets them against the upheavals in Breton's public life during that time, they make for a bittersweet and revelatory counterpoint.

In 1926, the thirty-year-old Breton was in his fifth year of marriage to Simone Kahn, with whom he shared a relationship of great intellectual complicity but, it appears, waning physical passion. Two years earlier, he had met the socialite and poet Lise Meyer (Lise Deharme) during her visit to the "Bureau of Surrealist Research," a kind of office-cum-meeting place meant to attract like-minded individuals to the movement, who so enraptured the normally imposing Breton that he found himself painfully tongue-tied. Wealthy and extremely flirtatious, the short, dark-haired Lise was once described as "a very attractive sorceress, with the voluptuous and seductive eyes of the Queen of Sheba." She found it no great task, and apparently no small pleasure, to tease the renowned Surrealist leader into a hopeless infatuation that would last for the next three years. Recounting that first meeting in his book *Nadja,* written in 1927, Breton tells of Lise's offer to leave him one of her blue gloves—an offer that Breton refused in a panic: "I don't know what there could have been, at that moment, so terribly, so marvelously decisive for me in the thought of that glove leaving that hand forever."

During this period, Breton composed a number of poems and letters to Lise, but few are so explicit or revealing as "The door to Lise's house"—a house Breton desperately wished to enter, but which he constantly found "guarded by a sea bird/Who must be stabbed in mid-flight." From entreaty to exasperation, Breton pled his case to the elusive socialite, who kept her door sufficiently ajar to allow for hope, but never open enough to permit access. "You see the women you have loved/Without them seeing you you see them without them seeing you/How you've loved them without them seeing you," he wrote at this time, lamenting his absence from Lise's amorous visions. In 1927, Lise married radio pioneer Paul Deharme; Breton grudgingly admitted defeat and courted her no more.

It was barely two months after his renunciation of Lise that Breton met the person whom many consider the great passion of his life. In late 1927, the novelist Emmanuel Berl attended one of the Surrealists' daily cafe meetings, bringing with him a young woman named Suzanne Muzard. "Tall, slender, gracefully shaped, with regular, slightly Nordic features" (according to one Surrealist), Suzanne had grown up, like Breton, in one of the industrial suburbs north of Paris. Although she was then living with Berl, within a few days Breton had persuaded her to run away with him to the south.

In keeping with his principle of living "in my glass house. . .where I sleep nights in a glass bed, under glass sheets," Breton had informed his wife of every stage of his passion for Lise Meyer, as he now reported the details of his flight with Suzanne. Simone had endured Lise with equanimity, even commiserated about the woman's cruel treatment of her husband, but it was an entirely different matter with this new rival—perhaps because, unlike her predecessor, Suzanne had no interest in holding Breton at arm's length. Instead, she soon demanded that he divorce Simone and marry her instead. Unprepared to take such a step, Breton tried to deflect the issue, whereupon Suzanne left for North Africa with Berl. The last section of *Nadja,* written shortly after Breton tried to prevent Suzanne and Berl from taking the train, magnifies an episode of sexual retaliation into an aesthetic credo: "Beauty is like a train that ceaselessly roars out of the Gare de Lyon and which I know will never leave, which has not left."

But the relationship was far from done, and over the next three years Breton and Suzanne pursued an affair marked by violent breakups and tempestuous reconciliations, during which Suzanne shuttled between her two lovers' homes (Simone having by now left the conjugal apartment) and Breton agonized over leaving his wife. Nor did matters change when Breton did file for divorce at the end of 1928, for just then

Suzanne unexpectedly married Berl—only to move in with Breton again a month after the wedding. It wasn't until the beginning of 1931, coincidentally just when his divorce from Simone became final, that Breton and Suzanne parted for the last time. Looking back many years later, Suzanne remarked that their liaison had "lasted just long enough to kill love by inches."

* * *

Much like Breton's life during those years, the poems in this volume can be split into discrete groupings. The first pieces, dated 1926 and inspired by Breton's frustrated longing for Lise, contain all the idealization, vagueness, and repressed spite of a love largely kept within the confines of his own mind. The second, from 1928, were written during the first year of his more corporeal passion for Suzanne; particularly in the three texts dated late August and early September (composed while the couple was on holiday), one can easily find traces of both the ardor and the fury that characterized so much of their relationship. The poems from 1931, finally, reflect the devastation of love's ultimate failure. "Exhibitionistic Poem" and "Prophetic Poem" are from a series of six "genre" texts written in one marathon sitting, from 10 p.m. on May 7 to 3:15 the next morning. Two weeks later, in "After the Giant Anteater" (a reference to the animal he had taken as his personal totem), Breton was still mourning the loss of the woman who had "smashed the jewel of this day into a thousand shards." The following day, he composed the longest and most celebrated of his poems for Suzanne, the erotic, desolate litany called "Free Union."

Ever wary of confusing poetry and autobiography, Breton apparently had little desire to commit these eleven works to the public eye. Two of them, "Allotropy" and "After the Giant Anteater," were published in his book *The White-Haired Revolver* (1932) but—unlike a great many of his poems from these years—were never reprinted in any of his subsequent collections. As for the others, Breton kept them scrupulously hidden in his notebooks until the day he died.

These translations are for Sadi Ranson, in love and sometimes in desperation.

*—MP, March 1998*

## THE DOOR TO LISE'S HOUSE. . .

The door to Lise's house
Is guarded by a sea bird
Who must be stabbed in mid-flight
Of seven gilded vases one must also break
The one containing a little ash
Which is never the same
Then from an all-white procession
A cowl comes tumbling down exposing a head of hair all its own
That I know nothing about
Except that it's crossed by a blue line
Over which I can no longer see
The line makes light and shadow
as early morning in Grasse
a line of girls harvesting in jasmine fields
The stars revolve around Lise's head
Slowly like the panthers she loves
And who love her and make the gown of the sky so beautiful
How oh how can we believe in the return of dawn's early glow
That marks the fifth season
The one that arrives every hundred years
Golden apples gleam on black trees
In the garden but she pretends not to see them
To keep people from begging pardon for her sadness
Which is an invisible or at least madly transparent fan
Lise the snow is falling on your mirror
Lise dressed in snow crystals
Snow like your name covering stamens of blood

*

Lise poems are made and unmade like mysterious
Passes before your eyes but it is only
the hands of he who wants to put you to sleep
or awaken you that are dreaming

The fairground stall where they devise
the unvarying yet countless games
Of love and death
Has never been so devoid of accessories
We'll try yet again to dazzle you
with the fireworks
I think called the sun
But the illusion is not enough and you who seek only illusion
The illusion of an incurable ill in the lands of absence
Behind the menage of giant flowers
where the future lands in the wrong zone
And holds standing on her runaway horse
A woman who is no longer Lise and who looks strangely like her
The adventurers of the vale who watch her pass
cannot bear the shine of her too-open eyes
They say that back when she lived a single flutter of
her lashes caused the sudden and oblique
migration of black insects whose long legs
stretch over the surface of streams
I who hear this from the depths of my tomb
I make sure to contradict nothing
And my heart through which her heart has passed
Or will pass whether she likes it or not
still vouches from far away in impossible hours
For the echo that exists only in grottoes
On rainbow evenings
But I swear the nights the nights are too much
Nights when poems are made and unmade
Nights when she is too tempted
to leave the substance for the shadow
Nights that I press secretly against my
heart with the image of hollow trees
where adorable cruelty revels
Marvelous nights of stones that cannot be lifted
and of Lise
Night of nights that I call without Lise

[3 *July* 1926]

## ALLOTROPY

The electric buzzer rings once more
Who's coming in
It's me pull yourself together if you want me to put you together
The closet is full of linens
There are even moonbeams that I can unfold
You've changed
Here's the proof that you've changed
The gifts they give the dead in their coffins
The gifts they give newborns in their cribs
Are almost the same the arrow shows the direction you're coming from
Where you're going
Your heart is on the path of that arrow
Your eyes which will again shine bright cloud over with the mist of things
Your hands grope along a road for the dark needle that can prevent catastrophe
You see the women you have loved
Without them seeing you you see them without them seeing you
How you've loved them without them seeing you
The black wolves in turn pass behind you
Who are you
Shadow of an evildoer on the high walls
Shadow of a signaler stretching farther than the signal
I am the primary guilty party
As well as the primary innocent party
My head rolls from on high where my steps will never fall
What makeup
No one will recognize me
Later between the stones in a heap
The window is wide open
On that magnificent heap
Bend forward
Bend forward to change again

It is indeed you who bend and change
That photograph you forgot to have toned
Is so like you

[*ca.* 1926]

## IT'S YOU IT IS NOT US. . .

It's you it is not us it's the fire that doesn't fear the wind
The kind that sweeps quicker than wind over the countryside
A young girl shakes her black hair in sleep
And watches us pass
And watches you pass it's you it is not us
The genius of the well lowers his magic blue hoop onto your path
It's no longer you is it you it is not us
There are doors for every precipice
Even for the ones we fall over and all the way down there are birds
Birds that live only there
Whose wings form an X more vibrant than any other
Where are you going the address is guiding you I see her fine nude legs
There are no precipices for you
No fleeting oaths that glide over resplendent waters
You are the light winding about the necks of trees
The light that escapes no one and that twists around the grindstone no one sees
Here is the sea here are the races and rosaces you love
The eternal armor of snows on the sea
The wet coupes whipped by the red algae of long avenues

Here are the uniforms with their beautiful aiguillettes
Is it there do you want to see the cross that never rises above sea-level
Do you want forests of mirrors furrowed with black lightning
That hides behind the northern dawns
Do you attend the intimate coronations of queens with no subjects
Or else do you come from the serene pallor of mortal things
Like me questioning you and seeking your arms like flame through a grill
What grill the grill of time
What time the time of tears
Where are the shapes of leaves of veils of huge butterflies that [make the wind tremble
Where is the fire going the fire that doesn't fear the wind

[*ca.* 1926]

## I DO NOT KNOW BUT I *KNOW*. . .

I do not know but I KNOW
Here is my season that looks toward autumn in lands where darkness never falls
Where the days do not wane by so much as a flying bird's breath
If it is flying it's because I know
I know it will never come to rest
The swallow is shaped like my hands
That's why it skims the ground just before rainfall
But it is beautiful out so beautiful that it's no longer here nor elsewhere

It's later in a clearing
In a clearing at the very bottom of a mine
Into which an elevator drops full of stones
Who knows
Balloon falling
Knowledge is very short it is so in every alphabet in the world
We say knowledge the way we say I love you
But lips can't always claim that ray of sunshine that keeps
certain lands from ever seeing night
Lips are not always those silken ladders
Lips do not always open onto what we KNOW
When we believe in divination in its long parade of stars and
corollas
Corollas I spoke the word Corollas
Corollas I KNOW In this corolla is a sudden spasm.

[*ca.* 1928]

## MY STEPS AFTER YOURS. . .

My steps after yours the shadow in the leaves
A pansy at a dip in the lane
My fingers on the key the pale river
And everything that calls back time
Ah the railway switch in a downpour
While the fawn laughs in the clearing
A summer's day so long it goes all the way round
I see you in the shadow my steps after yours
You're out of your mind and almost as beautiful
As the coming of life

*

Tell me of that queen it was so tremulous
That the clock seemed wet
The stuttering of grasses near the water
Was her crown and you were stepping from a car
By the palace that looked like sporting equipment for
    Madame des Ricochets

*

The eagle has caught two sheep in its talons
The black sheep closes its eyes
Poor abyss there's a star clinging to its reflection
And the eagle drops the boxes containing the rings
The bands peal the stones bleed
And in the violet glacier shadowy lakes blend together
At the foot of the waterfall the Riesling juggles with its dagger
We come to the inn and not a moment too soon
Death throes ride in a four-smokestack coach
How long will we see the past

*

Go on I'll catch up
Go into the woods
Head back into the water
Lie down in the irises of the bare featherless wall

[*ca.* 1928]

## MAKE IT SO DAYLIGHT. . .

Make it so daylight does not yet enter
Who's there?
With his cages full of red wheels
Let him finish setting his egrets outside
A rose window of sky-colored grass on which you walk
Between the cobblestones
I see silent caravans much like an accordion on a table
I see the water flowers arranged by species along a riverbank you are following
I see night such as birds make with their great square eyes
Birds that have a mirror relationship with fireflies
Night does not knock at the glass door it spends its time in the closet
Amid the blue and green linens it sing's it zigzags through the house
In the name of the forest and the sea
Which one is darker which one do you dare name more often
With lips that make me see the forest and ocean
One inside another when the wind scatters the great written sheets
And the grass rises in the dimming lamps
Not long ago in the country they built large iron constructions
Which are beautiful and tall and like my love
Armatures that are good only for love and the sky
They still don't know what they are used for
The geniuses that watch over your hands to keep them from lighting, lighting
In the beam of a lighthouse I see white ships falling into distress one by one
The geniuses that watch over your hands over your eyes so that they'll be like spinning pins
In the wheels of bird cages
And also graceful quartz quadrilaterals under the worn pickax of men beaten down by emotion
Go all around the world while you sleep
Thinking that time sets off like a shot

In front in front of everything that for you counts
As marvelous in appearance like a gyroscope on the lip of a glass
Or like the white screen whose patience is made of so much haste, desire, drama, and pursuit
While you are caressed by the palm of tears
And by eternal leisure that brings delight
Sad and happy almost in equal measure
Like those butterflies that look too much like leaves like soldiers running on glaciers
I see your huge portraits
Because of a braid of hair ten times too long
I see the ice crack under the soldiers
Everything is silent as in the most wonderful days of the ark
The imagination is a flower bed of broken lances
In imagination I find only the heart's grace
I see the Templars in their immemorial cowl
They are scattered and distant in my dream
What I adore what nothing could ever make me burn
Thou Suzanne the very shape of fire

[29 *August* 1928]

## AH LA LA, AH LA LA, AH LA LA, LET ME CRY. . .

Ah la la, ah la la, ah la la, let me cry, ah la la, what misery! So you think starch is sentimental, and that's why they call it starch? You've got it wrong: starch is wicked, dew is not gathered from dewberries, and what if I told you that stars die! As sure as I'm here speaking to you, I've seen a star die. It was one evening,

naturally. She was returning to her little shed along a dark blue hallway. Granted, she wasn't very big, but at least she was a star. She wasn't a common ember like so many women. She had five points so long as one loved her (otherwise she pretended to have only four). A premonition is not a breadcrumb or a tree trunk; I'm talking about stars, of course. Mine—for you've surely guessed it was mine—mine was a little afraid. It had just walked under a ladder, a black ladder. When a black star walks under a white ladder no one sees anything wrong, but when the opposite happens you'll agree that it's night and you will be afraid. My star sat on a chair. There were small engravings on the wall, the celestial fire was in collusion with the water; [. . .] held in the hollow of a star. It was then that the bird with sulfur plumage sang. It sang the interiors of houses and its song complained of the trees; it sang the view one has from windows and its song tucked a desperate bed. Then the star vanished in a scented vapor, and the sainfoin of the mirrors faded, and the closets opened onto boreal scenes, scenes of love that could not be verified because of the cold. One star less—who even thinks about it? For myself, I admit that the splatters of molten metal standing in for my thought bear no relation to the heavenly ebbs we obstinately call the Milky Way. If only I were of this world, if I were called Nocturne or something like that! But no, I have no star, and I don't know how to sleep in the grass. I hide in the gossamer splendor of your gazes, I lose myself in the desolation of whatever isn't your features, I love you and I approach only dead stars, I love you, you who are not afraid to walk under the indolent ladders of noon.

[*ca. August* 1928]

## THE IDEA OF LOVE. . .

The idea of love walked along the water and her gaze was full of absence, and her eyes spat lightning. The impressionable evening received by turns the imprints of grasses, clouds, bodies, and wore crazy astronomical designs. The idea of love walked straight ahead without seeing anything; she was wearing tiny isosceles mirrors whose perfect assemblage was amazing. They were so many images of fish tails, when, by their angelic nature, they answer the promise one might make of always finding each other again. Finding each other even in the depths of a forest, where the thread of a star is an articulation more silent than life, the dawn a liquor stronger than blood. Who is lost, who truly wanders off when a cup of coffee is steaming in the fog and waiters dressed in snow circulate patiently on the surface of floors whose desired height can be indicated with one's hands? Who? A solitary man whom the idea of love has just left and who tucks in his spirit like an imaginary bed. The man falls all the same and in the next room, under the moon-white verandah, a woman rises whom the idea of love has abandoned. The gravel cries outside, a rain of glass is falling in which we recognize small chains, tears in which we have time to see ourselves, mirror tears, shards of windows, singular crystals like the ones we witness in our hand on awakening, leaves and the faded petals of those roses that once embellished certain distillery bottles. It's just that the idea of love is, it seems, angry with love. This is how it began. It was September 3, 1928, and the trees were bleaching in the water under the beater of songs, before knees too beautiful to hollow out the marble of prayers. Love undid the bed that the idea of love always tried to make anew. It had lasted too short a time: love, whose hair is made of a blond star in which a brown star is caught, whose hands are always folded over other hands, and who, wherever he goes, drags along his reverse image, reproached the idea of love her perspectives of forests, her crafts of lace, and even that constant increase of neither-flesh-nor-bone creatures she drew around herself in the absurd salons of continuity. Love claimed that birds built their nests using small iron wire, very fine string, and straw, or at least that they had

them built that way. According to him, flowers were cut out by minuscule saws following the whims of a single body, a kind of marvelous frozen mannequin, certain parts of which were covered with varnish, and that one had only to close one's eyes to see it appear between two flaps of a door with white satin weather-stripping in the superb tropical night. To this, the idea of love replied that the uninflammable straw of phoenix nests was still of this world, that the splendid compound of floral eyes was sharpened day and night at the passage of singers and fixed needles, and that there was no greater slowness than that of life, no wax in which the magical traits of won and lost were imprinted more indelibly, that nothing was vacant on the surface of the universe, not even abysses, not even drops of water in their sameness, not even leaves in the difference, not even the shut-eyed mask of the author of the *Discourse on Passion,* dear to the emblematic lizards of the Chinese flag. Love, who demanded absence in presence, stared long and hard at the idea of love, who demanded utter presence in absence, and cried out, "Death to you, absinthe-robed sprite, paler than the lampshades of leaves on glowworms, eternal distraction of the weak and the strong, you who want the most because you can do the least, parcel of savage future inside something that carries only the virgin totality of the present with its folded wings, the great fan of the present with its folded wings." And yet the quarrel had lasted since the dawn of time. Isn't it true, rope ladders, runaway horses, mysterious explosions that mark the end of calm days, and you, premeditated tumbles down Niagara Falls, lofty taming of spotted animals, wand of graces that projects far afield the insane glimmers of a crown of mayflies!

[3 *September* 1928]

## EXHIBITIONISTIC POEM

I will seize my bed around the middle
And I will shake it with all my dreams
Redheaded women can jump rope
While making eyes at me like thought
Nothing will stop me
I will bury the window
The crowns of convolvulus and mirabilis
Then I'll wonder aimlessly while arranging precious
agricultural machines on wallpaper
The silence that is already adventure
Will again be the clothes I've left behind
Lapels plastered down
The morning glory that curls up
Only one stamp in two will be canceled on the letter I don't
wish to read
Putting off until tomorrow the acquittal of the last criminal
The andirons in their box
The dogs baying at the moon on the casket of exhibitionism
I will enter the scheme of night
I will resign myself to this scheme
I will watch myself being portioned into a waiting game
No more angles no more of those sinister machicolations
discovered when we tried to eat the bread
Women scrupulously torn apart
Women set with men who shine while loving them
And who respond by that dry flowering of agaves
In warm countries in burning countries in tepid countries
Since everything grows cold anyway even lava
Even memories even the great cinder boxes where
strawberries fade away
I will find my name written on the blazing atrocity
The sheaves of my name lying at the feet of hazelnut trees
The fires of my name already lying awake in scandalous
forget-me-nets
The Niagaras of my name struck by the haughty expectation
of worlds

That huddle onto themselves in the porcupine quills of my
name
When it is spoken in the round
In a murmur as if I were still loved
As if I had ever been loved

[7 *May* 1931, 10:15 *p.m.*]

## PROPHETIC POEM

Little destiny passed away this morning
At a tender age
At the Caponnière
Hey taxi
The sandy grass grows long and longer
The calendar with aspen leaves
Decorates the old the young
Comings and goings
Our friends standing before the sorry village band
Our enemies in the clock
Emerge single file
One covering the other
Arm in a sling and the scarf is a first communicant's armband
There are women too
Neither our friends nor our enemies straddling the horse of
our differences with others
Oh-so-vaunted paganism leads the effort
He is the first-born without terrace
Who wallows in the sun
The wood messiah is coming ladies

He hasn't passed by here
He's a flowering hazel tree
I appeal to the lower angle of time
The shape of an egg in the egg cup but not the egg in exotic wood
The infallible course of the nut
Later in a minute
A glowworm on the fingernail
The woman I'll love beautiful as a herd of antelope
Her breasts bitten her lip enveloped in a cone of soft words
The woman I'll love will install a padlock in her hair
A big blond lock and that'll be that for the ghosts
Who aim the drawer of their chains at the vaudeville palace
Appear clouds
Wear out straps of the winds
The water is at the bottom of the sprinkler that rises above statues
In a moment centuries from now
A cage used between two flights of birds
The trap that mice wear on their tails for cats
The primitive ball
Will tire of philosophy and become the quay of a deserted city

[8 *May* 1931, 2:30 *a.m.*]

## AFTER THE GIANT ANTEATER

Women's stockings sift the London light
The quays are stations black with crowds but white with vanished generations

And when I say London it's for poetic form
But the women's stockings are really clock hands
Beneath black mother-of-pearl garters
They belong to something I cannot name
For want of a creature who would be distinct enough from creation
And destruction to lower her own night over my thought spinning round
They have been carried into time by space
By female space very different from the other kind and that's all
Above the stockings is flesh and on either side of that flesh are bulldogs
Black and white as I said
And still higher the languid game that plays with a handkerchief
Everyone in a circle
And neither higher nor lower the enchanted telegraph wires
Scents confined in vague saucers
There is also a prison that brushes against the air of freedom
This contact engenders the somber flower of passion
That shatters everything in its wake with its fingers of glass
That absorbs the ambient air the breathable air bubble by bubble
And at that elevation perennial strawberries
Are harvested morning and night in the embers
That open onto pleasure in an agate star
The armor here shows so charming a flaw
Such old earth with its pink crust becomes desirable
That words leap over the cliffs with all their roots shining
And seek the tenderest part of the ear
The electric grass has momentarily lain down
The light deflects even the ash of the eye
That remains open as if before the impossible
This flower that would be the morning-and-evening-glory
Strength and weakness drop their equipment nearby
And already the amazing feats begin
Then the dagger-colored dramas the comedies shaped like scarves

Rise by one note
And far away in the woods the future between two branches
Begins to quiver like the unappeasable absence of a leaf
Here the two pans of the scale the two sides of the hearth
Take turns submitting to the deprivation of evaluating and seeing
I think of the Great Bear but it is not she
I would like minors to understand me
And ivy to be interested in what I'm saying
The abrupt line the treacherous gap of fire that uncovers its face
Will be but a call of the devil in the abstract city
Toward the unswearable reign of the crackling
Nameless woman
Who smashes the jewel of this day into a thousand shards

[20 *May* 1931]

**Translator's Notes**

*Ah la la, ah la la, ah la la, let me cry. . .*
"So you think starch is sentimental" (line 1): Untranslatable pun: Breton is playing on the apparent connection between *amidon* (starch) and its two "sentimental" components, *ami* (friend) and *don* (gift).

"was in collusion with the water; [. . .]" (line 13): Six or seven lines of text are missing from the manuscript at this point.

*Exhibitionistic Poem*
"The crowns of convolvulus and mirabilis" (line 7): Untranslatable pun: the plant names *belle-de-jour* (convolvulus, or morning glory) and *belle-de-nuit* (mirabilis, or four o'clock) are also slang terms for prostitute.

"cinder boxes where strawberries fade away" (line 26): Untranslatable (and possibly unintentional) pun: *fraise* (strawberry) here seems to be used as an echo of *fraisil* (coal or ember), which would relate to the "cinder boxes" mentioned just before. Breton makes the same displacement in "After the Giant Anteater," written two weeks later.

*After the Giant Anteater*

"Women's stockings sift the London light" (line 1): Untranslatable pun: the verb *tamiser* (to sift) inevitably calls to mind *la Tamise,* or the Thames—thus introducing London "for poetic form."

# JOHN OLSON

## TWO POEMS

### WAVE MECHANICS

A wave is a web is a woof is a warp
is a wing is a wink is a wriggle is a wick

is a world. Salesmen
in a ring around a table. A gaily

decorated inn full of fine linen & reptiles
There is nuance & numismatics & ocularity

in a name. High temperatures
& refulgent abstractions mobilized

into glue. Sound is a wave
motion which occurs when a sound

source sets the nearest particles into motion
Fast & free delivery. Giorgio, Opium, Chanel #5

L'Air du Temps & Oscar de la Renta
If I say of a piece of Schubert's that it is melancholy

that is like giving it a face
I don't express approval or disapproval

I merely indicate the pace
of a musical stimulus spectral with egg whites

& wrought iron. The eye sees farther
when it is closed, & the ears are folds

of skin. Stirrups for grasping the sound
of the Himalayas. The separation of the lips

liberate possibilities of liquid & glands
makes a word but what makes a world

is nothingness sandwiched between stands
of date palm & bulrush. The churn of the wind

is a calculus of pools oozing in all directions
heavy hissing perennially wrinkled dunes

The wind carried out of a headlight
is a demonstrable freedom, like turning a knob

& opening a door into Egypt. A life
of pyramids & buttons the hollow of the cheek

bald heads & calico a dugong on a balance beam
the emission of electrons & a deep rudder of discourse

carrying us up the Nile. Ah yes, the Nile. Where a wave
is a wallow is a window is a waver is a weave

# ODD

*"Isn't it very odd that I should be unable—even* without *the institution of language and all its surroundings—to think that it will stop raining?"—Do you want to say that it is queer that you should be unable to say these words and* mean *them without those surroundings?*
—Ludwig Wittgenstein,
Proposition 540,
*Philosophical Investigations*

Isn't it very odd that I should be unable even without
the institution of language & all its surroundings to think
a locomotive would move when I put my hand on the cold

black hand on the window of the electronic supply store
or that it is possible to say I & mean eye or say eye & mean I
am unable to be able to be unable to be able to be unable isn't
it

odd that I am able to institute a law or set a broken jaw
without benefit of morphine or employment of a morpheme
isn't it odd that I should be unable to lactate at will or stick

a mist of sensation in a phenomenon of fog isn't it odd isn't it
very odd that an odor has a certain ardor or an ardor an odor
or that a differential differs from a deference as a diffusion

differs from a suffusion or a collision a collusion or two
women in blue might also be in brown or that a memory
might
ameliorate as well as ambulate or that a balance beam might

suggest an image of balance or indicate a place where balance
is practiced or that sleep might knit up the raveled sleeve of
    care
or that anyone should care that a drum majorette has tossed

a sparkly baton in the air or that a column is a form of pillar
or that a grandiloquent black adorns the back of a caterpillar
forming a chrysalis & a chrysalis a helicopter or a hip

attach to the sacrum & femur of an adult female standing
behind the counter of a department store or that the medial
condyle of the femur will roll in the cup of the tibia when she

bends to collect a cassette from the bottom shelf isn't it odd
that I should be unable to extend a distal phalanx to receive
this object or speak without a mandible or rib without

the institution of language without an ischium or wrist isn't it
odd isn't it very odd that the energy of speech can mean
the streets are wet & an awning flaps & the rain has stopped

# MAXINE SHEETS-JOHNSTONE

## NEANDERTALS

### I
### Introduction

There is a way in which the present controversy over the evolutionary status of Neandertals vis à vis modern humans—are Neandertals directly related to *Homo sapiens sapiens* or are the two species quite distantly related?[1]—epitomizes the great Western mind/body dichotomy. When it comes to assessing the capacities of modern humans, the terms of the inquiry and subsequent discussion typically gravitate, and quickly, to what is designated "symbolic behavior," or "symbolic meaning," or any number of other variations on the same theme. In their well-known book *In Search of the Neanderthals: Solving the Puzzle of Human Origins,* British anthropologist Christopher Stringer and archaeologist Clive Gamble readily demonstrate the drawing power of these honorific 'mental' epithets, as when, for example, they distinguish Neandertal "survival behavior"—mere physical manoeuvering to sustain life—from modern human "symbolizing behavior."[2] Implicitly anchoring all their discussions in just such oppositional and highly valorized terms—a mere body vies consistently with an exalted mind—Stringer and Gamble categorically and decisively separate Neandertals from *Homo sapiens sapiens.*

When it comes to explaining the evolutionary beginnings of modern human "symbolic behavior," Stringer and Gamble declare that its onset "can be compared to the flick of a switch," or in other words, that "arranging behaviour according to symbolic codes is an all or nothing situation." "Symbolism," they affirm, "involves making mental substitutions and appreciating associations between people, objects and contexts." As may be obvious, there is some question as to how, in a quite concrete sense, symbolizing activity could possibly have originated "in the flick of a switch"; correlatively, there is some question as to what, in an equally concrete sense, it means to "make mental substitutions" or "to arrange behaviour according to symbolic codes." My purpose is to address these difficult questions by offering

not simply alternative, but deepened, understandings of the symbolic. In particular, I hope to show both how symbols derive from analogical thinking and how analogical thinking is modelled on the body. I thus hope to show by example how a perpetuation of the mind/body dichotomy is not only pernicious to a just understanding of Neandertals but, by evolutionary extension, an obstacle to our own self-understandings. At bottom, and whatever the evolutionary relationship of Neandertals to *Homo sapiens sapiens* might be, the dichotomy precludes an appreciation of our evolutionary heritage and kinfolk. It does so by precluding an appreciation of the foundational significance of animate form: the animate form we modern humans are, and equally, the animate form(s) we modern humans are not.

## II
## Deepened Understandings of the Symbolic

In Stringer and Gamble's view, "the fundamental difference between the Ancients and Moderns is social"[3]—hence the prominence of "associations between people, objects and contexts" in their definition of symbolism and in what they designate as symbols and as critically significant behavioral changes. This preeminently social understanding of symbolism is not in the least peculiar. Anthropologists and philosophers generally concur that a symbol is a social phenomenon. Cultural anthropologist Raymond Firth, for example, writes that an anthropological approach to symbolism "links the occurrence and interpretations of symbolism to social structures and social events in specific conditions."[4] Philosopher Susanne Langer, in her earliest work on symbols, differentiates sign and symbol, remarking that "The passage from the sign-function of a word to its symbolic function is . . . a result of social organization."[5] There is, however, a further fundamental aspect of a symbol that both Firth and Langer recognize, and that is its representational power. Firth in fact declares the essence of symbolism to lie "in the recognition of one thing as standing for (representing) another."[6] Symbols, Langer writes, "let us develop a characteristic attitude toward objects *in absentia*, which is called 'thinking of' or 'referring to' what is not here."[7] The referential aspect is succinctly specified in the definitional statement that a relation is a symbolizing one "if and only if it is a four-term relation of standing for, where in the eyes of a symbolizer something, the symbol, stands for some other thing, the symbolized, within the context of a particular activity—for example, informing, giving orders, entertaining, or playing."[8] What is requisite, especially given Stringer and Gamble's claim

that the advent of symbolism was "an all or nothing situation," is an explanation of how *in an evolutionary sense* the idea of "standing for" could have arisen. In particular, the referential and not just the social dimension of symbolization needs to be evidentially grounded. Otherwise, no matter how social the group of creatures in question, there is no reason why all should treat some one thing as standing for some other thing. The referential dimension, in other words, needs to be shown to be anchored in some form of reality as readily perceptible, that is, as open to immediate awareness, as the social reality of other individuals. To that end, we will consider two interlocking ideas: the idea that *symbolization is a form of analogical thinking,* and the idea that *analogical thinking is foundationally structured in corporeal representation.* As might be apparent, such an understanding of symbolization construes mind and body not as two separate entities that are opposed to one another, or indeed, pitted against one another; it construes them to be all of a piece in the form of a living organism, a "persistent whole" in the throes and challenges of everyday creaturely life.[9] In the context of eight paleoanthropological case studies ranging from tool-making to burials to sexual signalling behavior to paleolithic cave art, I documented each of the interlocking ideas in detail; I showed how primatological (including hominid) and zoological studies validate the ideas and their linkage, and exemplified the linkage in analyses of diverse behaviors. To illustrate in an economic manner the relevance of these ideas to the present need to clarify the nature and evolution of symbolism—and the need as well to expand typical conceptions of "physical" anthropology—I will summarize and cite passages from this earlier work.[10]

Consider first the descriptive report by primatologist C. R. Carpenter whose research of the 1930s in many ways served to establish the field of nonhuman primate social behavior.

> When approaching a male, [the female howler] will form an oval opening with her lips and her protruding tongue will rapidly oscillate in and out and up and down. It is clear to an observer. . .that the function of this gesture is to invite copulation. . . . In a real sense the act is symbolic of sexual desire and readiness for copulation in the female and it stimulates appropriate responses in the male.[11]

There is no doubt but that Carpenter's description implicitly affirms the tongue to be a readily available spatio-kinetic analogue of the penis and the mouth a readily available spatial analogue of the vagina in the sexual communication of howler monkeys. There is no

doubt either that tongue and mouth are sexual analogues in the behavior of other primates as well, as studies of female langurs[12] and studies of the tongue-smacking face of some monkey species, especially *Macaca nemestrina*,[13] attest. Genital symbolization is furthermore evident in the sexual tongue-flicking behavior of !Ko Bushmen—present-day hominids.[14] Moreover even a ram, in his attempts to interest a ewe in being mounted, flicks his tongue in and out of his mouth as he thrusts his head forward, sidles up to, and nudges the ewe—as any sheep farmer will affirm. In short, there is ample evidence showing that corporeal representation is a biological matrix: in the everyday animal world, there is a fundamental disposition to represent meaning corporeally in the form of tactile-kinetic gestures. By the same token, there is a fundamental disposition to understand meaning corporeally. The quotation from Carpenter documents this fact. Carpenter's untroubled interpretation of the female howler's tongue-flicking behavior shows that Carpenter himself was not puzzled by the behavior nor did he have to analyze the behavior painstakingly to justify to his readers how he arrived at its meaning. On the contrary, his brief verbal description suffices to convey immediately to the reader the same unequivocal meaning the actual behavior embodied for him in the flesh. By the same tactile-kinesthetic/kinetic tokens of experience, the behavior is clear straightaway to the male howler monkey: he too knows "that the function of the gesture is to invite copulation." Were this not so, the gesture would hardly "stimulate appropriate responses in the male."

The fundamental disposition toward corporeal representation in the animate world is a natural disposition toward both iconicity and semanticity; that is, there is an iconic rather than arbitrary relationship between symbol and referent, and a built-in semantic dimension to living bodies that is evident both morphologically and behaviorally.[15] These natural dispositions toward iconicity and semanticity make decisively clear why—and how—animate bodies are semantic templates, or in other words, why corporeal representation is a fundamental biological matrix. It is a primary mode of communication and symbolization. Where meanings are *represented*, animate bodies represent them corporeally. In their form and behavior animate bodies are a primary source of meaning.

Primary modes of human symbolization substantiate the importance of semanticity and iconicity. These primary modes have been variously elucidated—for example, by Sigmund Freud in his psychology of the unconscious, by Susanne Langer in her aesthetics of art objects, by André Leroi-Gourhan in his archaeological analyses of prehistoric artifacts, and by Mary LeCron Foster in her linguistic analysis of

primordial language. In each case, great emphasis is placed on the iconicity and semanticity of the symbols. Indeed, this is why a psychology, aesthetics, archaeology, and linguistics of *symbolizing* behavior—*behavior that produces symbols but is not itself symbolic*—is possible—why pears and mountains can represent female breasts and umbrellas and tree trunks can represent penes; why works of art can be understood as dynamic forms that are logically congruent to the dynamic form of human feeling; why archaeological artifacts in their design features can be interpreted as representations of female and male genitalia; why the articulatory gestures of primordial language can be shown to be tactile-kinesthetic analogues of their referents.[16] What is important to emphasize—and not only in reference to the above specific domains of corporeal representation in human life, but in reference to corporeal representation generally—is that the behavioral disposition toward iconicity, as toward corporeal representation itself, is not a conscious one—or *necessarily* a conscious one. In the most fundamental sense, bodily symbols are structured not in reflective acts but in pre-reflective corporeal experience; that is, they are the spontaneous product of certain species-specific bodily experiences rather than the planned product of thought.[17] What Freud said of the dreamer may thus be true of the symbolizing animal: "The dreamer's knowledge of symbolism is unconscious."[18] But while the symbolizing animal may be, like the dreamer, unconscious of its symbolizing behavior as such, *unlike the dreamer*, it is not unconscious of its behavior. It is aware of its own actions in a way gradient to that in which a bird, a song sparrow, for instance, is fully and directly aware of its own song in the process of singing it. Both ethologists and sociobiologists have documented this awareness.[19] Thus, while perhaps unaware of the symbolism *as such*, an animal—human or nonhuman—may well be aware of the dynamic congruency between one behavior, a symbolizing behavior, and another behavior, its referent, for example, aware of the dynamic congruency between in and out movements of the tongue and in and out movements of the penis.

It should be clear from the above consideration of primary modes of symbolization that corporeal representation is a fundamental mode not only of sexual communication but of multiple kinds of communication. In the *Tanzsprache*, for example, the dancing honeybee represents direction by her orientation to gravity, distance by the spatio-kinetic contours of her dance, and the richness of the food source by the vigorousness of her dance.[20] Whatever the communicative circumstance, and whichever the creature—whether bees, baboons,[21] bonobos,[22] howler monkeys, or hominids—a form of behavior is evident in which a gesture or sequence of movements points or refers

to something beyond itself. Whatever the particular referent, the symbolization is conceptually played out corporeally, along the lines of the body.

Given this evolutionary framework for understanding symbols and symbolizing behavior, two unmistakably major principles emerge: first, *humans (Homo sapiens sapiens) do not have an exclusive corner on symbolization*—they are not privileged evolutionary beings who alone are given to symbolizing behaviors; and second, *the question of the origin of symbolization cannot be reduced to a question of light switches.* In each case, a good deal more is involved. When symbolization is viewed in evolutionary perspective, a broader array of evidence must be examined and a consequently fuller and deeper understanding of symbolization must be offered. Consideration of the origin of hominid tool-making makes both points unequivocally. While a readily self-evident relationship between teeth and stone tools is consistently and intuitively recognized by many researchers,[23] an empirically demonstrated *conceptual* association between teeth and tools is not shown. In other words, "the idea of a similarity between teeth and stones is not a new one but neither has it been analyzed to any depth."[24] Thus, to affirm simply that stone tools replaced teeth for processing food gives no indication of the *experiential* and in effect conceptual basis for the replacement. Why not a replacement of teeth by knuckles or feet? To answer that upright posture freed the hands for tool-making does not constitute an explanation of the connection between tools and teeth and thereby explain the origin of tool-making, any more than the affirmation "tool-making freed the teeth for sound-making" constitutes an explanation of the connection between sounds and words and thereby explains the origin of talking. What is needed is a detailed descriptive, i.e., experiential, analysis that shows a conceptual linkage, even a rational connection, between stone tools and teeth. Only in this way can one begin to examine and ultimately understand the *origin* of stone tool-making. With this understanding, it becomes immediately clear that stone tools are not *symbols;* they are stone tools. But they are stone tools that have been crafted on the model of the body, namely, teeth. They are thus *analogues*. Again, as with symbols, such analogues are not necessarily structured in reflective acts but are embedded in pre-reflective corporeal experience. For example, the primary datum of stones and teeth alike is their resistant hardness. They are not squeezable; they do not bend. This quintessential resistant hardness is a felt reality, a tactile-kinesthetic lingual and manual phenomenon. If one knew nothing of stones or teeth but merely saw them, there would be no reason to posit either as hard—or soft. The binary opposites are clearly tactile qualities. The primary analogy

between stones and teeth is thus one of structural correspondence. Just as the analogy is not necessarily a conscious one, neither is it necessarily an articulated one at all; to think analogically is not necessarily to think in words. On the contrary, as the analogy between teeth and stones demonstrates, the similar quintessential hardness of teeth and stones is an *experienced* fact of life. What the example of the origin of stone tool-making thus demonstrates is that analogical thinking is indeed grounded in the tactile-kinesthetic body. What the example thereby also demonstrates is that corporeal concepts—nonlinguistic concepts such as hardness—are in no way inferior to their linguistic relatives. Most importantly too, the example shows that analogical thinking does not necessarily eventuate in the production of symbols. Analogical thinking is a fundamental form of thinking that generates understandings on the basis of bodily experience, and those understandings may or may not eventuate in the production of symbols.

While the example of stone tool-making shows the original crafting of stone tools neither to constitute in itself "symbolic behavior" nor to eventuate in a symbol, it might nevertheless be claimed that at a later time (the Upper Paleolithic), modern human tools were communally conceived as symbols—symbols of power over others, for example, whether hominids or non-hominids. To be viable, however, the claim must address the question of symbolic reference; it must set forth the analogical basis on which tools come to *stand for* power over others rather than being experienced simply as powerful instruments in and of themselves, instruments that can among other things harm or subjugate others. As one anthropologist has in fact pointedly observed, "stone tools that are regarded as symbolic are generally *not* functional as powerful instruments."[25] In this regard, then, it is clearly not sufficient to invoke symbolic codes or theoretical acts on the order of "mental substitutions" as operative in the production of tools. Such invocations merely sanction free-wheeling attributions, ones that in some instances seem to border on unbridled arrogance.[26] This is why conceptual muddles develop. This is also why discontinuities can be easily asserted, not only discontinuities between Modern and Neandertal tool-making behaviors and artifacts (and, ironically, by extension, necessarily Modern and earlier hominid tool-making behaviors and artifacts), but discontinuities with respect to "symbolic behavior." The discontinuities—behavioral, artifactual, and symbolic—go hand in hand. With the advent of modern humans, a definitive break occurs, a Rubicon is crossed. On one side are tools, campsites, burial sites, and so on, which are symbols; on the other side are simply tools, "nests,"[27] "rubbish disposals"[28] and the like. The question of how one gets from one side to the other is answered by incantation, as it were: by calling

into being "symbolic codes," "mental substitutions," and certain "associations." An empirically grounded answer, on the contrary, lies in the recognition of a faculty already there. That faculty is the power to think analogically, to perceive similarities in relationships, and to use the body as a semantic template. In short, if corporeal representation is the cornerstone of analogical thinking, and analogical thinking is the cornerstone of symbolization, then it is a leap neither of fancy nor of faith to think that, far from being a matter of newly operating symbolic codes, mental substitutions, or associations, symbolization was an extension of an already extant biological matrix. The flick-of-the-switch, light-bulb theory of symbolization, one that basically construes mind and body as antithetical Cartesian substances, fails to recognize this matrix, enshrining intelligence instead in a rarified mental essence belonging to humans alone. As I have elsewhere argued, "intelligence does not reside at such a doubly exclusive address."[29] It resides in living creatures, "persistent wholes" that are both human and nonhuman.

In sum, symbolization is latent in analogical thinking and analogical thinking is latent in corporeal representation. However revolutionary and strikingly original the practices of Moderns some 40,000 years ago, they are rooted in a mode of thinking that is modelled on the body, that gives rise to corporeal concepts, and that has its origins far back in evolutionary history. When the basic biological matrix of corporeal representation—a clearly apparent evolutionary feature of morphology as well as behavior[30]—is ignored, "the mental" is easily given dominion *uber alles* and an entire body of evidence is stifled. Suppressed too is an appreciation of the evolutionary continuities that basically bind hominid to hominid and humans to nonhumans. So also is the fundamental evolutionary principle that there is nothing *de novo* in Nature. This emphasis on continuities does not mean that differences are unimportant—much less non-existent. It means only that difference is not equivalent to a lack of commonalities. In marking out differences, one must take care not to overlook the ties that bind us in a common evolutionary family or in a common creaturehood. These ties may in both a literal and metaphorical sense lie deeper than artifactual and fossilized surfaces, and in turn articulate evolutionary matters of fact not yet examined, discovered, or perhaps even imagined.

## III
## Animate Form: Neandertals and Modern Humans

We move now to a detailed consideration of animate form: to an appreciation of how typical divisionary thinking bypasses the phenom-

enon of animation, to the task of marking basic kinetic differences between Neandertals and modern humans, and to a beginning assessment of the conceptual implications of those kinetic differences. In marking kinetic differences, we heed the caveat above: the point is not to deny our commonalities with Neandertals but to fathom in beginning ways what it was to be a Neandertal hominid.

Neandertals bodies are consistently described postcranially in terms of their robusticity, their power grip, the shortness of their distal limb segments, and their distinctive pelves.[31] As intimated above, references to movement in the context of these descriptions are sparse and brief. Indeed, animation—movement—is not an item in any index of any book on Neandertals, any more than it is an item in indices of books on paleontology or paleoanthropology generally. The subject is consistently skirted even in places where it appears to be the topic of direct concern. Stringer and Gamble's sixteen-line section titled "Posture and movement" (in *In Search of Neanderthals)* is a case in point. Except for a passing reference to "squatting," and a reference to "strong movement" (the meaning of which is not exemplified), the brief section concerns itself with anatomy—with the structure of the shoulder blade, for example, and the way the pelvis "may be related to the different way in which the hip joint operated"[32]—and not with either movement or posture. Indeed, that there is a realm of movement to be explored and understood is readily attested to by its being nowhere in evidence.

The closest approximation to an awareness of the paleoanthropological significance of movement, and in particular, the movement style of Neandertals, is to be found in a 1959 article by anthropologist Alice Brues titled "The Spearman and the Archer—An Essay on Selection in Body Build."[33] In the context of discussing body build in relation to tool type, Brues focuses attention on specific kinetic acts and gives specific kinetic definition to precisely such terms as "strong." At one point, for example, she describes strength in terms of defensive action. She links strength of body build with "static defense," the creature "stand[ing] its ground instead of fleeing."[34] She illustrates how laterality of build that is favorable to static defense is oftentimes linked to increasing size, citing the gorilla as an example.[35] She notes at a further point, in a discussion of how, in a creature without weapons such as a gorilla, "[the magnitude of] destructiveness is [proportional] to the amount of squeezing or crushing force exerted momentarily on the fragile parts of the victim." She astutely points out in this context that a gorilla's physique "drastically reduces speed of locomotion," with the effect that, "though he could kill anything he could catch, he cannot catch anything."[36] In brief, discussion turns on actual movement, what

creatures can and cannot do. Though Brues does not go on to distill movement dispositions from these "can's and cannots"—nor indeed speak in terms of a repertoire of "I can's"[37]—it is clear that such repertoires and dispositions quintessentially characterize the human and nonhuman animals she describes. In this respect, her analyses readily demonstrate a seminal attention to animate form. An implicit concern with kinetic and potential energy undergirds her discussions along with an explicit concern with movement possibilities, possibilities not only of "squeezing or crushing," but of "crashing through," "leaping," "climbing," "running," "drawing [a bow]," and so on. It should be emphasized that it is not a matter of throwing in a few movement terms here and there in the course of a discussion about body build; the discussion itself is anchored in movement such that a distinct sense emerges of what is kinetically entailed in being a particular kind of body. Furthermore, in the use of words such as "strength," and in descriptions of what are usually simply termed "behaviors"—e.g., "hunting," "striking"—the same distinct kinetic entailments are evident.

It bears emphasizing that Brues was *not* proposing that body build correlates *only* with the disposition to produce and to use a particular type of weapon. In view both of what she writes about body build and of the disclaimers and admonitions with which she concludes her research, anthropologist David Frayer errs in attributing to her such a proposal; Brues never claims that "body size changes are related only to the adoption and use of weapon types."[38] Not only does she temper her research conclusions by an awareness of their provisional nature, but she states explicitly both that her suggested correlations "should be critically questioned" and that other factors entering into selection "must be considered jointly." In this context, she mentions climate. In fact, she has already taken the environment into account—in terms of terrain as well as climate—in describing movement possibilities; for example, in speaking of the kind of place in which "the original specialization of the human leg took place," she speaks of "an open prairie country where continuous running and leaping were possible."[39] The point is important. Where the focus is on movement, *where one thinks in terms of the movement possibilities of animate forms,* then terrain and climate enter naturally into the discussion. These factors are of indisputable import to an understanding of Neandertals. What one can kinetically do and not do, and similarly, what one is kinetically disposed to do and not to do, are intimately related to environmental conditions, to *circonstances*, as Lamarck would have put it. A study of movement thus necessarily—by its very nature—considers organisms *in situ*, as making their way in the context

of a certain topography and climate. It thus joins together causal (selectional) factors that are typically conceived and treated independently of one another. The idea that one must specify *either* thermal regulation *or* biomechanical advantage as causative agent with respect to the morphology of Neandertals is a prime example of typical practice.[40] Where movement conceptually anchors the analysis, the idea collapses as a viable working principle.

Thinking in terms of movement one indeed reconstructs in corporeally dynamic terms rather than in categorically static ones. By the same token, one reconstructs holistically, in non-divisionary metaphysical terms. Further analysis of Neandertals in terms of animate form will show clearly that paleoanthropological reconstructions can find firmer ground in holistic and dynamically-oriented thinking than in divisionary substance thinking and that, in turn, the quest to describe "what it was like" (to be such-and-such a hominid) can be far better satisfied.

To bring the point firmly home, let us pause for a moment to consider the classic assessment. From virtually the moment of their original discovery, Neandertals have been regularly conceived and are still conceived by many as being mentally deficient in one way or another. They are conceived to have *lacked* something cerebral—something in the way of thoughtfulness—since they did not "improve" in major ways or accede to our 20th century human kind of behavioral capabilities. It is as if, given all the time they had at their disposal—all the time they walked the earth—they stood pat; indeed, we are told by Stringer and Gamble that it was "half a million years or more of inaction."[41] Considering the esteem in which earlier hominids *(Homo habilis, Homo erectus,* not to mention australopithecines) are generally held, the negative judgment is odd,[42] but it is especially odd when coupled with comparative statements concerning the singular abilities of *Homo sapiens sapiens:* their colonization of new areas, for example, their future planning abilities, their sophisticated social networks that insured survival in challenging times, and so on. The negative judgment is especially odd because Neandertals were around for more than 200,000 years (approximately 250,000 to 35,000 BP). That is not a long time in evolutionary terms, but it is a very long time when measured against our own puny human evolutionary life span of 40,000 years. Indeed, we modern humans have existed less than one quarter of the time that Neandertals existed. In contrast to Neandertals, early *Homo sapiens sapiens* are described in glowing terms that apply still to us since we are their descendants. Thus prized abilities—the ability to plan ahead and to form social networks, for example—are implicitly if not explicitly taken to be features of our own lives, and this

in spite of contravening evidence. For example, any quick appraisal of the present global environmental situation readily instructs us that many humans are singularly deficient in planning ahead; they see only as far as their own immediate desires and/or their own lifetime. Moreover rather than building social networks that give them "insurance policies" (as Stringer and Gamble put it)[43] against hard times, humans on the whole appear unkindly disposed if not hostile toward their national and ethnic neighbors, unduly acquisitive, and to have been at war almost incessantly as far back as history records. Furthermore, social networks in the form of treaties between or among nations have proved notoriously unreliable "insurance policies." In short, from a Martian or otherwise more objective viewpoint, modern humans in recorded history appear to be socially and ecologically deficient creatures who are more properly defined as selfishly engaged rather than either future-oriented or socially congenial. However revolutionary, stunning, and undeniably wonderful the inventions and practices of early modern humans, basic inventions and practices of those latter-day humans who are their descendants arouse—or should arouse—wonder of an altogether different sort. There is every reason to doubt rather than marvel at their so-called "fundamental behavioral capabilities" and "improvements," and the like. In fact, there is every reason to wonder whether *Homo sapiens sapiens* will match the evolutionary longevity of Neandertals.

The point is not deflective in the least to the topic at issue. What we humans want to claim for ourselves are clearly the *summum bonum* brains of which Stephen Jay Gould speaks.[44] We do this by mental comparison—and by a selective perception and amnesia that allow us to identify ourselves only with what we find mentally praiseworthy in the past. Thus it is that *the* significant differences distinguishing modern humans from Neandertals are not *physical* differences but illustrious mental ones that appear *ex nihilo*.[45] This is why *abstract* formulations can be formulated as they are—not only in a mental vacuum and honorifically on behalf of *Homo sapiens sapiens* alone, but as if they specified indelible features of all modern human minds, thus features in whose glory present-day humans may bask since it was "our kind" who mentally distinguished themselves. Clearly, what is at stake and what the comparison secures is "the traditional *summum bonum* of bigger brains. . .because bigger brains are so good to have."[46] In thoroughly supportive fashion, received Western wisdom teaches that quintessentially significant differences are "in the head" and have nothing to do with bodies. This is why Stringer and Gamble can write in answer to their question, "Where did modern behaviour originate?" that "[W]herever new developments took place they did so rapidly (the

flick of a switch), *adapting to the anatomy of modern humans that had been around for perhaps 70,000 years"* (italics added).[47] Great new ideas arose with "the flick of a switch" and adjusted themselves to the corporeal packaging in which they found themselves, the modern human's mind adapting itself swiftly and efficiently to the body in which it happened to be. In this metaphysically divisive way, modern humans find the kind of reasons they seek for cherishing themselves. What they want to cherish is "the mental," the kind of mental that churns out mental substitutions, that bequeaths unique and remarkable ingenuities in the form of symbolic behaviors and unique and remarkable abilities such as the ability to plan ahead. They do not seek reasons for cherishing themselves *physically,* except by disdaining what they consider unattractive: prognathous features, no chin, squat build, and so on.

In his article, "Evolution by Walking"—a review of a newly instituted exhibit of fossil mammals at the American Museum of Natural History—Stephen Jay Gould emphasizes precisely a view of evolution that does *not* give preeminence to modern humans, either "temporally" (they are the latest and thus most intelligent arrivals) or "morally" (i.e., they are "higher" rather than "lower" forms of life).[48] He lauds the cladistic arrangement of the exhibit fossils; they are organized in their chronological order of branching, and not in terms of "their later 'success' or 'advancement'." Accordingly, as visitors walk through the exhibit, they do not figuratively climb "a ladder of putative advance."[49] They walk through evolutionary time and learn in and by walking, the proper evolutionary place of humans. This seemingly quite novel key idea—that we learn in and by moving—is expressed at the end of the article by the thought that "cogitation and ambulation" go hand in hand.[50] But Gould has in fact already extolled the idea of "using the visceral to grasp the cerebral." Much earlier in his article, he specifies that *"in order to illustrate a concept,"* one moves the body directly through the process or phenomenon of interest (italics added).[51]

Now if movement can *illustrate* a concept, then might not movement *generate* a concept in the first place, that is, might a concept not have in fact originated in the course of moving or having moved? Not only why but how otherwise would movement possibly be able to illustrate a concept? In a broader sense, might not the most fundamental practices and beliefs of any particular hominid group have been forged in the context of moving and having moved? If so, then in the most basic sense movement possibilities and dispositions delimit one's conceptual possibilities and dispositions. Again, if so, then morphology—whether a matter of living creatures or fossilized specimens—must be ultimately conceived in terms of *animate form*.[52]

Gould's idea of a tight and intimate connection between thinking and moving clearly coincides with the sequence of ideas proposed earlier: in the most fundamental sense, thinking is modelled on the body, in particular, the tactile-kinesthetic body. Animate form is thus at the core of what traditionally passes for strictly cerebral activity. Such an idea is latent not only in Gould's article. It is latent in articles by paleoanthropologists and other researchers. In "Technological Changes across the Middle-Upper Palaeolithic Transition: Economic, Social and Cognitive Perspectives," for example, Paul Mellars notes that "over large areas of Europe, the major changes in both the anatomy of the human populations, and the technology of the associated archaeological assemblages, can be shown to have occurred over at least broadly the same range of time—i.e., broadly between c. 40,000 and 30,000 BP."[53] This idea—that morphology and technology are linked—is actually evident to any perceptive and non-Cartesian-thinking reader who compares two illustrations that Mellar includes in his article. The backed knives (Figure 20.2) representing the tool industry of the Neandertals are squat, bulky, indeed, *robust* tools; the points and crescents (Figure 20.3) representing the tool industry of early modern humans are lithe, elongate, indeed, *gracile* tools.[54] Tool morphology matches body morphology; the correspondence is palpable.[55] Mellars himself, however, does not make the connection. Instead, he leaps precipitately over the traditional metaphysical chasm to arrive at "symbolic 'meaning'," at the idea that Upper Palaeolithic humans, in contrast to Middle Palaeolithic people, "imposed form" on their raw materials and thus attained to "symbolism and symbolically defined behaviour."[56] He attributes the new "cognitive factors" that mark the transition from "'archaic' to 'modern' human populations" to "some kind of fundamental change in the basic structure of human thinking."[57] The idea that thinking could have something to do with the body—or the body with the mind—never surfaces.

The morphological-technological connection is a clear validation of analogical thinking. It is a validation of corporeal representation. Subsistence tools of Neandertals and early modern humans were in the image of their own bodies; their own bodies were semantic templates. When we allow the tools to speak for themselves, they speak unequivocally of this relationship. In this respect, they also speak of distinct differences. Neandertal tools were created not so much in terms of the linear *contours* of the body as in the image of its *bulk*. Moreover they were accessories to rather than extensions of the body; they were, in other words, auxiliaries of a body that was already instrumentally proficient, already by itself a most effective tool. Sheer strength and bulk were at the ever-ready disposal of this body. Why would a labor-

saving device in the form of a lever, for example, be thought of if one could immediately pick up the small boulder and move it by oneself? When we think of brawn, we might tend to think of it as antithetical to brains—much like thinking of a linesman in football as compared to a quarterback, for example. But this divisionary thinking misses the point. If one's build and size afford one a reliable effectiveness, if what is there naturally is not only basically sufficient but ever-ready, why would one be disposed to tinker about with the idea of forging something new? Not only were sheer strength and bulk at the ever-ready disposal of this body. So also were teeth that could be used in a variety of non-dietary ways. C. Loring Brace and Ashley Montagu in fact describe Neandertal teeth as "the Lower and Middle Pleistocene equivalent of the Boy Scout knife," stating that "[i]t seems likely that they were used to crack nuts, peel bark, squeeze, scrape, pry, and cut a variety of objects, and also to tan rawhide."[58] Given their broad utility and on-the-spot availability, we may ask why a Neandertal would spend energy and time making stone equivalents? Such an endeavor would indeed involve not merely time and effort in making the equivalents, but time and effort in looking for proper materials to begin with, in forging a diversity of stone forms specifically tailored to the use each would be put, in carrying such forms about to places they are or might be needed, in devising places to stash them when not being used, and so on. In short, if all the various acts of scraping, peeling, squeezing, and so on, were readily performable *dental* acts—in other words, if the body itself was diversely capable on the spot—then certain ways of living consistent with those diverse capabilities would be more congenial and efficient than other ways, i.e., more congenial than creating a diversified and elaborate stone tool-kit that in many (though not necessarily all) instances would merely duplicate the instrumental proficiencies of one's own teeth. In effect, whatever might be necessary to eking out a living, defending oneself, or dealing with the world, its instrumental point of origin was the body itself. That the tool kit of Neandertals did not change appreciably over 200,000 years is readily understandable in terms of this fact.

Now the idea of a conceptual linkage between morphology and technology may suggest an absolute synchronization of anatomy with culture, any change in the latter being immediately coincident with a change in the former. The suggestion is erroneous and simplistic on several inter-related counts. To begin with, culture is not reducible to technology. As anthropologist Mary Stiner has shown in extended detail, a good deal more is involved in the establishment of, and in the continuity or changes in, cultural practices—specifically those associated with subsistence—than stone tools.[59] Environmental change, land

use, and mobility, for example, are highly significant variables. So also are prey focus and prey availability. Absolute synchronization of anatomical and lithic change could occur only in the absence of such fundamental and critical factors. Thus, that anatomically modern humans were present *before* the advent of a modern tool kit, for example, does not contravene the basic idea that hominids made stone tools in the image of their bodies or the ample evidence on which it is based: a palpably visible congruity of bodily and lithic morphologies. Second, recognition of the formal analogy between body morphology and subsistence tools entails no correlative claims about boundaries or watersheds. The typically drawn "boundary" between Middle and Upper Paleolithic is literally set in stone; in other terms, the Neandertal-to-modern human "transition"—be it defined in terms of continuity or replacement—has been evidentially marked primarily on the basis of a difference in stone tool kits. Newer studies question the narrowness of this perspective, not only in terms of there being other highly significant factors to consider as indicated above, but in terms of construing the Neandertal tool industry (the Mousterian) "as a monolithic, static thing"[60] (not to say a "robotic" thing)[61] that remained unchanged for thousands of years. In short, the boundary itself is open to question as a readily and exactingly delimitable and fixed moment in hominid evolution, a moment that marks both a lithic watershed and a correlative "mental" watershed dividing a "primitive or ineffective"[62] intelligence from an intelligence that is advanced and powerful. As noted above, recognition of the formal analogy between body morphology and subsistence tools carries with it no temporal claims about stone tool typology as an evolutionary or "mental" boundary marker, hence no claims that a certain kind of tool kit makes its entrance and exit in precise temporal concert with the appearance and disappearance of a certain kind of body. To say that stone tools were modeled on the body in the course of hominid evolution is no more than to acknowledge what is evidentially apparent in paleoanthropological and archaeological data: a basic *formal* analogy between the bodies of anatomically modern humans and *their* tools and between Neandertal bodies and *their* tools. More broadly, it is to say that one designs tools congenial to the body one is, not to the body one is not; equally, one designs them congenial to the use they will be put *and can be put given one's situation,* not to a use that is impossible in virtue of either the environment in which one lives, for example, or of the kind of prey that is available. Third, the relationship between morphology and technology is precisely *not* a "flick of the switch" relationship. Such a relationship would require, *inter alia*, that certain infants at certain times be born as fully formed adults, with bodies radically different

from their parents, and correspondingly, with radically different stone tools in their hands. On the contrary, infants are born within a certain lineage, within a certain social tradition, within a certain ecological and climatic environment, and so on. The kind of stone tools made and used by particular groups within a species may certainly vary, but those variations do not suddenly negate the distinctive formal characters that define in a classic way a particular style of stone tool-making any more than morphological variations preclude classic definitions of species. Fourth, radical changes in stone tool-making, at least insofar as they become standardized and are not, for instance, a one-time-and-never-more-pursued accidental discovery, clearly involve conceptual elaborations on a particular pragmatic theme, be it hammering, stripping, grinding, or whatever. Like the pragmatic theme itself, these conceptual elaborations are clearly dependent on lithic resources, on the kind of prey species in the area, and on all those other variables mentioned above. There is, in effect, no reason to think that analogical thinking operates in a vacuum, that the moment a certain kind of body is present, it immediately begins churning out a certain kind of tool kit. The actual is tied to the circumstantially possible. But again, it is also tied in a fundamental sense to the realities of animate form. The tools one makes are the tools one can wield: tools that fit one's grip (however large or small, powerful or weak, for example), that fit one's style of moving (however fleet or heavy, long or short in endurance, for example), that fit one's range of movement (however flexible or constrained, ample or small, for example), and so on. In short, what one conceives and elaborates in the way of a tool is patterned on the animate form one is.

We should perhaps note that the basic formal conjunction is not contravened by the fact that anatomically modern humans were on the scene before their classic tool-kits were *or* that some Neandertals made tools similar to anatomically modern humans. Anthropologist Richard Klein's view that "the modern physical form evolved before the modern capacity for culture" and that "it was culture and not body form that propelled the human species from a relatively rare and insignificant large mammal 35,000 years ago to a geologic force today,"[63] does not engender a substantive sense of "body form" in the full and detailed sense understood here; in other words, Klein's "body form" is not equivalent to animate form. Moreover although Klein disaffirms a connection between culture and "body form," he actually obliquely supports the idea of corporeal representation—or analogical thinking—when he writes in one instance that "The Upper Paleolithic contrasts with the Mousterian in many ways, of which the most often-cited is the widespread Upper Paleolithic emphasis on stone flakes whose length

was at least twice their width";[64] and when he writes in another instance of how the "inferior" behavior of Neandertals might be connected with their "distinctive morphology": "the Neanderthals were behaviorally inferior to their modern successors, and, to judge from their distinctive morphology, this behavioral inferiority may well have been rooted in their biological makeup."[65] His negative judgment of Neandertals aside—and his implicit idea of a hominid march toward "the *summum bonum* of bigger brains" aside also—Klein obliquely intimates that there is something more to bodies than meets the classic Western eye.[66] Spelled out, this intimation would affirm that "distinctive morphologies" have behavioral implications precisely because they are *animate* morphologies and being animate, they have conceptual implications as well.

When we translate into animate bodily terms assessments of purported "lack" and "inaction," we begin to understand technological differences at their conceptual source. So too when we translate into animate bodily terms assessments of revolutionary new practices. Indeed, the following kind of differences between Middle and Upper Palaeolithic hominids begins to emerge.

A stocky body is not disposed toward ballistic movement.[67] An upright body with short distal limb segments cannot throw in either as easy or as effective a ballistic manner as one with longer distal limb segments. With a greater range of movement comes a greater facility in moving through a ballistic pattern of movement. Moreover more momentum is built up, with the result that the thrown object will release and travel with greater speed. Furthermore, movement of the body as a whole in the direction of the throw can add to the latter's force. Thus if one runs, for example, in the process of throwing, the run will add to the body's momentum and be transferred to the throwing arm and object thrown. Longer distal limb segments are more suited to ballistic movement for just such reasons.

Consider further that in non-ballistic acts such as striking, bludgeoning, or thrusting with a spear rather than throwing it,[68] an upright moving body is consistently in control of the object it utilizes. It wields power directly and firmly; it is always in command of the object with which it hits or batters. A ballistic movement is in contrast self-propelling: an initial thrust of power sends the movement—and the utilized object—on its way, as in throwing or kicking something, or in swinging or hurling an instrument. The fact that movement itself takes over means that one is able to act at a distance. What one relinquishes in the way of continuous control over an object, one gains in the way of power over greater distances, and in the way of a built-in measure of safety with respect to the target toward which the object or implement

is aimed.[69] It is of considerable interest in this context to point out that greater bodily injury and trauma are evident on Neandertal fossils than on early modern ones and that the difference is thought to be due to a difference in the material culture of the two hominid species.[70]

The above minimal distinctions suffice to introduce the possibility of analyzing corporeal concepts in greater detail. The concept of acting in immediate contact with things, for example, of being up against them, and the concept of acting at a distance upon the same things as in throwing something at them, are distinct in several respects. Not only is one's sense of control different in each case, but one's sense of *effort, space,* and of *one's own spatiality* is different. The idea that an object can act effectively on something when it is outside one's own grasp, for instance, is a complicated concept. It engenders a sense of what movement can do on its own, that is, an awareness that an object can do work for a body even when that object is no longer in hand. It engenders a sense of distance, of speed, and of timing with respect to a goal or target. Striking and thrusting have a much narrower compass with respect to effort, space, and one's own spatiality. Distance is measured in terms of the length of one's striking or thrusting arm. The target, whatever it might be, is palpably close. Moreover one's own body movement as a whole may be constrained in the sense that the immediate presence and size of the target may limit one's possibilities of action. What one gains in consistent control of an object may thus be offset by what one risks in the way of safety—of bodily injury or trauma. Range of movement, safety, effort, the spatial immediacy or distance of the target, its comparative size—all such aspects of the tactile-kinetic situation engender distinctive spatial-kinetic concepts. These distinctive concepts, of fundamental significance in and of themselves, may readily contribute to a spatial sense of the world, of where it begins and ends, for example: is it an always close-at-hand, proximate world or an on-going expansive world stretching out beyond actual reach? Clearly, the idea of expanding into new habitats has a certain spatial resonance with the experience of acting at a distance and its attendant concepts, including the concept of possible opportunities in a world not immediately at hand, that is, opportunities in an extended world.

To arrive at such deeper understandings of the conceptual significance of movement, we must necessarily forego the common notion that movement is merely a change of position in conformity with some "mental" directive. That notion is statically focused. Indeed, we must restore to movement its inherent dynamics and in so doing acknowledge the spatio-temporal play of forces that particularizes and situationally defines movement and that potentially generates a par-

ticular domain of concepts. This acknowledgment is in large measure an acknowledgment of the fact that *how* one moves is part and parcel of the fact *that* one moves. Like all so-called movement "behaviors," striking and throwing, for example, are inherently distinctive kinetic acts, both experientially and conceptually. They have a different spatiality not only with respect to the object they each utilize and its spatial relationship both to the acting individual and to the target; they have a different spatial dynamic in terms of experienced range of movement and experienced changes in the linear conformations of the body; they have furthermore a different spatiality in terms of experienced corporeal solidity and flexibility. Correlatively, they have a different temporal and tensional structure: the one movement is temporally abrupt and likely repetitive, the other is sequentially articulated; the one is tensionally concentrated, the other is tensionally diffused in a manner coincident with sequential articulation. If one notated in a movement notation system[71] the likely distinctive movement patterns of Neandertals, then one could compare their overall style of movement with the overall movement style of modern humans. Kinetic differences would become evident as would broadly generalized distinctions in animate form: distinctions between strength and agility, for example, between compactness and flexibility, between an ability to stand one's ground, change direction quickly with a ready stability due to a proportionately lower center of gravity and laterally rotated legs, and an ability to run, twist, scamper, change direction quickly but with a lesser stability due to a proportionately higher center of gravity and antero-posterior positioned legs. The primary purpose of charting such distinctions would not be comparison *per se*, especially to the end that an axiological scheme emerges naming a winner and loser or a superior and an inferior. Indeed, if, as anthropologists Erik Trinkaus and Pat Shipman write of Neandertals, "Tremendous strength, endurance, and fortitude exceeding those of any modern human lifestyle were required on a daily basis,"[72] then what could—or can—possibly be the purpose of comparing Neandertals to modern humans other than setting in relief the peculiar and unique kinetic possibilities and dispositions of each together with their peculiar and unique conceptual implications? The challenge in articulating kinetic possibilities and dispositions is precisely to show how dynamic elements of movement and the tactile-kinesthetic body play out conceptually, i.e., analogically, in a way similar to the way in which stone tools play out conceptually both the tactile character of teeth and the spatio-kinetic character of animate form.

With deepened understandings of animate form, of corporeal matters of fact, and of the symbolic, the fundamental question concern-

ing Ancients and Moderns shifts to new ground and in consequence is reformed. Rather than a question of whether Neandertals were replaced by or were genetically continuous with early modern humans, the fundamental question is whether we can justly say we know Neandertals if we know them in anything other than "in their own terms."[73] To know them "in their own terms" means to be able to imagine on the basis of fossil, artifactual, taphonomic, and related kinds of evidence—thus, in a rigorously-tethered empirical way—what it is like to be a body we are not and to draw out the kinetic and conceptual implications of being that body.[74] The quest, in other words, is not merely a factual one in the sense of specifying historical relationships. It is a factual one in the sense of specifying *what it was like*. Accordingly, our capacity to imagine ourselves along different corporeal lines and to fathom in turn what it was like kinetically and conceptually to live along those lines is the beginning ground and measure of our understanding of Neandertals—whether close kin or distant relatives.

## Notes

O A different version of this essay appeared in *Anthropology of Consciousness* 7/4 (December 1966): 31-50, under the title "Tribal Lore in Present-day Paleoanthropology: A Case Study" and was also presented as a guest lecture in Social Anthropology at Trondheim University (Norway) in 1996. A still shorter version was presented at the March 1996 meeting of the Society for the Anthropology of Consciousness held in conjunction with the American Philosophical Association Pacific Division meeting. A much longer version of the essay is forthcoming in *The Primacy of Movement* (John Benjamins Publishing, "Advances in Consciousness Research" Series).

1 If the former, then Neandertals are properly designated taxonomically as *Homo sapiens neandertalensis;* if the latter, then they are properly designated taxonomically as *Homo neandertalensis.*

2 Christopher Stringer and Clive Gamble, *In Search of the Neanderthals: Solving the Puzzle of Human Origins* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1993), p. 204. Note: Britishers hold to the original spelling of Neandertals, i.e., they have not dropped the silent "h," which in any event was not pronounced in German even before the orthographic reform.

3 Ibid., p. 213.

4 Raymond Firth, *Symbols: Public and Private* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1973), p. 25.

5 Susanne Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key,* (New York: New American Library, 1948), p. 38.

6 Firth, *Symbols,* p. 15.

7 Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key,* p. 37.

8 Albert A. Johnstone, "Languages and Non-Languages of Dance," *Illuminating Dance: Philosophical Explorations,* ed. M. Sheets-Johnstone (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1984), p. 167.

9 The phrase "persistent whole" comes from J. S. Haldane, *The Philosophical Basis of Biology* (New York: Doubleday, Doran and Co., 1931), p. 13.

10 Maxine Sheets-Johnstone, *The Roots of Thinking* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990).

11 C. R. Carpenter, "Societies of Monkeys and Apes," in *Primate Social Behavior,* ed. Charles H. Southwick (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1963), pp. 49-50.
12 Phyllis J. Dolhinow, "The North Indian Langur," *Primate Patterns,* ed. Phyllis J. Dolhinow (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1972), pp. 85-124.
13 J. A. R. A. M. van Hoof, "The Facial Displays of the Catarrhine Monkeys and Apes," in *Primate Ethology,* ed. Desmond Morris (Garden City: Anchor, 1969), pp. 52, 58.
14 Irenaus Eibl-Eibesfeldt, "The Myth of the Aggression-Free Hunter and Gatherer Society," in *Primate Aggression, Territoriality, and Xenophobia,* ed. Ralph L. Holloway (New York: Academic Press, 1974), pp. 435-57.
15 For a further discussion of the semantic dimension of living bodies, see, for example, Swiss biologist Adolph Portmann's, *Animal Forms and Patterns,* trans. Hella Czech (NY: Schocken Books, 1967).
16 See Sigmund Freud, *The Basic Writings of Sigmund Freud* (New York: Modern Library, 1938), and *Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud,* 24 vols., ed. and trans. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1953), vols. 4 and 5; Susanne Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key* (New York: New American Library, 1948) and *Feeling and Form* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953); André Leroi-Gourhan, *Préhistoire de l'art occidental* (Paris: Mazenod, 1971); Mary LeCron Foster, "The Symbolic Structure of Primordial Language, in *Human Evolution: Biosocial Perspectives,* ed. Sherwood L. Washburn and Elizabeth R. McCown (Menlo Park, CA: Benjamin/Cummings, 1978), pp. 77-121.
17 See Sheets-Johnstone, *The Roots of Thinking,* pp. 126-28 for a discussion of species-specific bodily experiences in relation to primatologist Stuart Altmann's concept of "comsigns."
18 Sigmund Freud, *A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis* (New York: Liveright, 1963), p. 148.
19 Peter Marler, "On the Origin of Speech from Animal Sounds," in *The Role of Speech in Language,* ed. J. F. Kavanagh and J. E. Cutting (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1975), pp. 11-37, and "An Ethological Theory of the Origin of Vocal Learning," in *Origins and Evolution of Language and Speech,* ed. Stevan R. Harnad, Horst D. Steklis, and Jane B. Lancaster, *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences* 280 (1976): 386-95; and Richard Dawkins and J. R. Krebs, "Animal Signals: Information or Manipulation?" in *Behavioural Ecology,* eds. J. R. Krebs and N. B. Davies (London: Basil Blackwell, 1978), pp. 282-309.
20 Karl von Frisch, *Bees: Their Vision, Chemical Senses, and Language* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1964) and *The Dance Language and Orientation of Bees* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967).
21 Adult male baboons grind their teeth and display their canines (yawn) as a threat gesture. Iconicity is clearly apparent in these gestures. See K. R. L. Hall and Irven De Vote, "Baboon Social Behavior," *Primate Patterns,* ed. Phyllis Dolhinow (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1972), pp. 125-180.
22 See E. Sue Savage-Rumbaugh and R. Bakeman, "Spontaneous Gestural Communication among Conspecifics in the Pygmy Chimpanzee *(Pan paniscus),"* in *Progress in Ape Research,* ed. G. H. Bourne (New York: Academic Press, 1977), pp. 97-116; see also Sheets-Johnstone *The Roots of Thinking* for an analysis of bonobo gestural communication as analogical behavior-or corporeal representation.
23 Nicholas Toth, personal communication. See also his article, "The First Technology," *Scientific American* 256 (1987): 112-21 in which the connection between dentition and tools, though implicit, is forcefully clear. See also Mary LeCron Foster, "Meaning as Metaphor I," *Quaderni di semantica* 3, no. 1 (1982): 95-102; Milford H. Wolpoff, *Paleoanthropology* (New York: Knopf, 1980), pp. 92 and 168, for example; and A. Mann, "Hominid and Cultural Origins," *Man* n.s. 7 (1972): 379-86.
24 Sheets-Johnstone, *The Roots of Thinking,* p. 26.
25 John Lukacs, personal communication.

26 For example, with respect to the "smaller societies throughout the Ancients' world," Stringer and Gamble write that "It was, in terms of hominid colonization, half a million years or more of inaction" *(In Search of the Neanderthals,* p. 215); with respect to the absence of the Ancients in eastern Siberia, they write, "Food was always available in these habitats, it was simply high-risk to exploit" (p. 216.); with respect to language, after remarking that Neanderthals "no doubt spoke, albeit simply and probably slowly, they write that "Neanderthals lacked complex spoken language because they did not need it. (p. 217). All of these judgments are judgments of people Stringer and Gamble know only by indirect evidence. The judgments are exceptionally broad and denigrating, considering that first-hand knowledge is in the form of fragmentary, open-ended, and for the most part quite fortuitously discovered evidence. Paleoanthropologist Erik Trinkaus has remarked in the following way on these kinds of limitations: "[O]ur current paleoanthropological record is incomplete and . . . our interpretations of later Pleistocene human evolution will change as further discoveries are made. Furthermore, the information available at one time to any one researcher or group of researchers is an incomplete set of the potentially available data set. Therefore, all interpretations can be realistically seen as no more than state-of-the-art conclusions, inevitably to fall or be modified as the field progresses" ("Cladistics and Later Pleistocene Human Evolution," in *Continuity or Replacement,* eds. Gunter Brauer and Fred H. Smith [Rotterdam: A. A. Balkema, 1992], pp. 1-7, p. 2).

27 Stringer and Gamble, *In Search of the Neanderthals,* p. 207: "We suspect . . . that the [Neandertal] structures at Molodova and Arcy-sur-Cure more resembled 'nests' than the symbolic 'homes' of the Moderns at Kostenki or Doni Vestonice."

28 Ibid., p. 159: "[W]hether it was a burial in the modern sense or more akin to rubbish disposal is the point at issue."

29 Maxine Sheets-Johnstone, "Hunting and the Evolution of Human Intelligence: An Alternative View," *Midwest Quarterly* 28/1 (Autumn 1986): 9-35, p. 9.

30 See, for example, Wolfgang Wickler, "Socio-Sexual Signals and Their Intra-Specific Imitation Among Primates," in Desmond Morris, *Primate Ethology* (New York: Anchor Books, 1%9), pp. 89-189; see also Sheets-Johnstone, *The Roots of Thinking,* chapter 4, for a discussion of basic male sexual signalling behaviors.

31 See Yoel Rak, "Kebara 2 Neanderthal Pelvis: First Look at a Complete Inlet," *American Journal of Physical Anthropology* 73 (1987): 227-231; "Morphological Variation in *Homo neanderthalensis* and *Homo sapiens* in the Levant: A Biogeographic Model," in *Species. Species concepts. and Primate Evolution,* ed. William H. Kimbel and Lawrence B. Martin (New York: Plenum Press, 1993), pp. 523-36; Erik Trinkaus, *The Shanidar Neanderthals* (New York: Academic Press, 1983X Trinkaus and Smith, "The Fate of the Neandertals"; Milford H. Wolpoff, Paleoanthropology (New York: Knopf, 1980).

32 Stringer and Gamble, *In Search of the Neanderthals,* p. 93.

33 Alice Brues, "The Spearman and the Archer—An Essay on Selection in Body Build," *American Anthropologist* n.s. 61 (1959): 457-69.

34 Ibid., p. 458.

35 Ibid.

36 Ibid., p. 462.

37 The term "I can" comes from philosopher Edmund Husserl, whose descriptive account of this fundamental animate power *(Ich kann)* is fundamental to an understanding of animate life in general, not just the animate life of humans. See his *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy Book 2,* trans. R. Rojcewicz and A. Schuwer (Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1989). For a discussion of the concept specifically as it relates to paleoanthropological studies, see Sheets-Johnstone, *The Roots of Thinking.*

38 David W. Frayer, "Body Size, Weapon Use, and Natural Selection in the European

Upper Paleolithic and Mesolithic," *American Anthropologist* 83 (1981): 57-72, p. 69.

39 Brues, "Spearman and Archer," p. 461. To be noted is the altogether new perspective on the environment in which upright hominids emerged. Rather than moving out to "open prairie country where continuous running and leaping were possible," early hominids are thought to have emerged "in the relative safety of the forests while living next to their cousins, the apes. *On the Edge* [Institute for Science, Engineering and Public Policy, Portland, OR] 1/6 (February 19%): 3. (See also, Geoffrey Cowley and Amy Salzhauer, "Humankind's First Steps," *Time,* August 28, 1995, 64.)

40 Erik Trinkaus, "Neanderthal Limb Proportions and Cold Adaptation," in *Aspects of Human Evolution,* ed. C. B. Stringer (London: Taylor and Francis, 1981), pp. 187-224.

41 Stringer and Gamble, *In Search of the Neanderthals,* p. 215. Cf. Niles Eldridge and Ian Tattersall, *The Myths of Human Evolution* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), p. 3: "The data, or basic observations, of evolutionary biology are full of the message of stability. Change is difficult and rare, rather than inevitable and continual. Once evolved, species with their own peculiar adaptations, behaviors, and genetic systems are remarkably conservative, often remaining unchanged for several millions of years." Eldredge and Tattersall later pointedly equate lack of change with a successful way of life (Ibid., p. 7).

42 It is, in fact, inconsistent in an evolutionary sense. For example, how can earlier hominids be cherished for their stone tool-making accomplishments, which are not judged by the standard of successive "improvements" over time, and Neandertals disdained for what is deemed their lack of stone tool-making accomplishments on the basis of a lack of successive "improvements" over time? The valuing and devaluing of our ancestors-be they close kin or distant relatives—personalizes evolutionary history in ways that detract from the history itself.

43 Stringer and Gamble, *In Search of the Neanderthals,* p. 210.

44 Stephen Jay Gould, "So Near and Yet So Far," *New York Review of Books* 41/17 (20 October 1994): 24-28, p. 27. Gould speaks of "the traditional *summum bonum* of bigger brains ... because big brains are so good to have" in the context of discussing the controversy over the correct taxonomic placement of Neandertals. Although he aligns "the traditional *summum bonum* of bigger brains" with those holding a multi-regional (Africa, Europe, Asia) evolution of modern humans, "the traditional *summum bonum* of bigger brains" is clearly at the helm of those claiming a single (African) origin as well-as the writings of Stringer and Gamble well attest. This is essentially because pursuit of "the traditional *summum bonum* of bigger brains" is not a matter of which theory one holds but a matter of an implicit and highly potent belief in the mind/body dichotomy.

45 *The* significant difference is unequivocally clear in Stringer and Gamble: "[T]he main structural difference distinguishing the Moderns from the Ancients was the practice of symbolically organized behaviour." Ibid., p. 207.

46 Gould, "So Near and Yet So Far," p. 27.

47 Stringer and Gamble, *In Search of the Neanderthals,* p. 218.

48 Stephen Jay Gould, "Evolution by Walking," *Natural History* 104/3 (March 1995): 10-15.

49 Ibid., pp. 13, 14, respectively.

50 Ibid., p. 15.

51 Ibid., p. 10.

52 The idea of conceiving morphology in terms of animate form coincides obliquely with Freud's notion that "anatomy is destiny." The latter notion obviously requires kinesthetic/kinetic and in turn conceptual fleshing out. It of course also requires de-

sexualization in the sense of being cleansed of its male bias. For related discussions of these matters, see Maxine Sheets-Johnstone, *The Roots of Power: Animate Form and Gendered Bodies* (Chicago: Open Court Publishing, 1994).

53 Paul Mellars, "Technological Changes across the Middle-Upper Palaeolithic Transition: Economic, Social and Cognitive Perspectives," in *The Human Revolution,* eds. Paul Mellars and Chris Stringer (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), pp. 338-365., p. 338.

54 Ibid., pp. 344, 346, respectively.

55 Lest anyone think these are mere "impressions," I should note that while Mellars speaks of the need for more "systematic analyses" of the Middle and Upper-Palaeolithic technologies, he himself relies on what he calls "intuitive impressions" (Ibid., p. 345). He speaks of such impressions as "pragmatic observations," i.e., intuiting the use of a tool (its type) on the basis of its morphology.

56 Ibid., pp. 358-60.

57 Ibid., p. 357.

58 C. L. Brace and M. F. Ashley Montagu, *Man's Evolution* (New York: Macmillan, 1965), p. 248.

59 Mary C. Stiner, *Honor Among Thieves: A Zooarchaeological Study of Neandertal Ecology* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).

60 Steven L. Kuhn, *Mousterian Lithic Technology: An Ecological Perspective* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), p. 171.

61 Ibid., p. 156.

62 Ibid., p. 171.

63 Richard G. Klein, *The Human Career: Human Biological and Cultural Origins* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), p. 397.

64 Ibid., p. 356.

65 Ibid., p. 334.

66 Such innovative-and liberating–intimations are few and far between in physical anthropology in particular and paleoanthropological literature in general, and they are quickly put to rest, as, for example, when Klein asks apropos anatomically modern humans, "Why did the evolution of behavior lag behind the evolution of form?" and responds: "Perhaps the answer is that body form was only superficially modern and that some further neurological change was still necessary for full modernity" (Ibid., p. 410). The implication, of course, is that hominid brains had not yet fully matured, i.e., that while visible bodies were ready "for full modernity," minds were not. Klein suggests as much when he forthrightly declares in an earlier passage that "Plainly, it was culture and not body form that propelled the human species from a relatively rare and insignificant mammal 35,000 years ago to a geologic force today" (Ibid., p. 397). Although Klein does not raise the question of where that propulsive culture came from, he intimates that it developed as a result of brain maturation. In short, minds beget culture; bodies simply beget more bodies. As for the notion of "a behavioral lag," one might well be puzzled and ask, Did the evolution of behavior lag behind the evolution of form? The implied delay of "*summum bonum* bigger brains" aside, lagging behavior strongly suggests that something was amiss in the creatures in question; their behavior was somehow deficient, less than it should be. In a sense, saying that anatomically modern humans showed a behavioral lag in not acceding sooner to "full modernity" is like saying that lobefinned fish, since they had bodies that were adaptable to land, were behaviorally deficient in not moving onto land sooner, thus speeding up the process of evolution rather than letting it drag along.

67 Motor physiologists use the term "ballistic" to refer to movement in which there is no feedback in the period between the initiation and completion of a movement, the hit "target" being the only self-correcting device. But ballistic movement

warrants fuller study in terms of animate form.

68 "Not only were the bones of the Shanidar Neandertals exceptionally stout and robust, . . . but the locations at which muscles were attached to those bones enhanced the power with which the biceps muscle could bend the elbow or with which the forearm muscles rotated the hand into a supine (palm-up) or prone (palm-down) position-important maneuvers in thrusting with a spear, for example" (Erik Trinkaus and Pat Shipman, *The Neandertals* [New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993], p. 381). See also, Brues, "The Spearman and the Archer, p. 462, for a discussion of the kinetic technique of bludgeoning.

69 These ideas concerning ballistic movement were first considered in Maxine Sheets-Johnstone, "Evolutionary Residues and Uniquenesses in Human Movement," *Evolutionary Theory* 6 (April 1983): 205-209.

70 See, for example, Klein, *The Human Career,* p. 344.

71 For sources on Labanotation, see, for example, Rudolf Laban,*Laban's Principles of Dance and Movement Notation*, 2nd ed., ed. Roderyk Lange (Boston: Plays, 1975); Ann Hutchinson, *Labanotation,* rv. ed. (New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1970). For sources on Effort/Shape notation, see, for example, Irmgard Bartenieff and Dori Lewis, *Body Movement-Coping with the Environment* (New York: Gordon & Breach, 1980); Irmgard Bartenieff, Martha Davis, and Forrestine Paulay, *Four Adaptations of Effort Theory in Research and Teaching* (New York: Dance Notation Bureau, 1970). For sources on Benesch notation, see Rudolf Benesh and Joan Benesh, *An Introduction to Benesh Movement Notation: Dance,* rev. ed. (New York: Dance Horizons, 1969). For sources on Eshkol-Wachmann, see Noa Eshkol and Abraham Wachmann, *Movement Notation* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1958). For a general discussion of movement notation systems, see Suzanne Youngerman, "Movement Notation Systems as Conceptual Frameworks: The Laban System," in *Illuminating Dance: Philosophical Explorations,* ed. Maxine Sheets-Johnstone (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1984), pp. 101-23. For interesting ethological applications of movement notation, see Ilan Golani, "Homeostatic Motor Processes in Mammalian Interactions: A Choreography of Display," in *Perspectives in Ethology,* vol. 2, eds. P. P. G. Bateson and P. H. Klopfer (New York: Plenum Publishing, 1976), pp. 69-134, and "The Search for Invariants in Motor Behavior, in Behavioral Development, eds. Klaus Immelman, George W. Burlow, Lewis Petrinovitch, Mary Main (London: Cambridge University Press, 1981), pp. 372-390; see also, G. Moran, J. C. Fentress, and I. Golani, "A Description of Relational Patterns of Movement During 'Ritualized Fighting' in Wolves," *Animal Behavior* 29 (1981): 1146-65.

72 Trinkaus and Shipman, *The Neandertals,* p. 381.

73 Ibid., p. 380.

74 For a detailed analysis of the methodology and the operative criterion for arriving at such paleoanthropological reconstructions, see Sheets-Johnstone, *The Roots of Thinking;*. specifically chapters 13 and 14 which address methodological procedures and issues. For a related perspective on the merit of examining what it is like to be a body one is not and the conceptual implications of being that body, see Sheets-Johnstone, *The Roots of Power: Animate Form and Gendered Bodies.* pp. 328-330.

# BRYAN JOHNSON

## H. DE SOTO

The theologian bears toward roosting,
a woman in the bath suckles a nail
and there it is, the whiteness of holding out promise,
of thick moss  groves of enemies sewn into pillows.
This year abides a few drips
of ink licked clean from the sharp angles  stiff feet
in the ant bed  and history unfinishes the untraceable
splintered hero wedged in a ragged garden.
Dark little cherubs girdle against snaring in fanatic hovels,
their blitheness  in homespun splendor plots like a shirt.
This forest ancient as a closed eyelid digging its claws
blown vagabond or frustrate  flicker of amnesia where
a girl lies insensible pinned in the viper's undergrowth,
in the far-off captaincy each barefooted hock
stepping into the old ice-born squadron of place names and
sorrow
a brocade  something to puncture the cheek
and light of the dead planets placed in its stead.

This is fine this  riffling of trees.

A faded forest ensnares a tongue scuttled in the pocket,

then the other sheltered lily

a trooping festival  roaming the slackened brakes.

Antics of fertile families stamped in a wildflower garden

edging attack  shadowy haystack girl buccaneering past the saddler's spittoon.

One flicker of disbelief is clearly nothing,

a fingernail purloined from the beak of a dying bird.

Mutiny is the bond against setting to roost in untraceable nestings,

this shade of sliced kite  finger tips rumbling up the back,

the wooded bluffs by exploding are remnant

vagrancy in the little mouth's teary-eyed footprints,

the parasol  its longitude  its cinders launched for the first dog arrival.

Slipping  a plague of paper glides into tent holes.

The elegiac foundling named in the out-of-bounds

who scratches the gate with his hands  coveys hum in the pathless brazen garden,

the sentinel flies stirring newfound sorrow

forever untouched  averting the bird's cold cheek.

# ELIOT WEINBERGER

## WHAT WAS FORMALISM?

I have recently come across an anthology with a fire-alarm red cover, an inflammatory title *(Rebel Angels),* and a gaseous introduction whose first word is "Revolution." It is not, as one might expect, a lost artifact of the Beat Generation, but rather a Molotov cocktail tossed by the radical right of poetry, the self-styled "New Formalists."

According to these Rebel Angels—who, like most conservatives, have short historical memories for what they are conserving—it was during the "cultural upheavals of the 60s and 70s" that formalism, defined as "meter and rhyme," was "largely. . .abandoned by American poets." The result was that "poetry and prose became nearly indistinguishable." [The 150 years of prose poetry aside, to what are they referring? People reading projective verse mysteries at the beach?] Happily, however, certain poets—Wilbur, Nemerov, Hecht, Van Duyn, among them—"courageous in their commitment to their art," withstood the onslaught, kept the faith, and inspired a renaissance launched by those misfits of the Generation of '68 for whom *baba* was a rhyme-scheme and not a guru, and who are now in their forties and fifties.

The formalism they have collectively revived is not merely "the art of making poems in measured speech." It "assumes a valued civility . . .a larger cultural vision that restores harmony and balance to the arts." According to the poet Timothy Steele, formalist poetry, more than any "other pursuit," can "nourish"

> a love of nature, an enthusiasm for justice, a readiness of good humor, a spontaneous susceptibility to beauty and joy, an interest in our past, a hope for our future, and, above all, a desire that others should have the opportunity and encouragement to share these qualities

which presumably were and are absent from "free verse," not to mention the "other" pursuits. The thought that justice and equal opportunity are the hallmarks of a flourishing formalist verse culture (such as Victorian England, the Court of Versailles, Heian Kyoto. . .)

belongs in a parallel universe, perhaps one where a group named after Lucifer & Co. promotes hope, good humor, beauty, and joy.

*Rebel Angels* collects the poems, each labeled with the form it employs, of twenty-five poets "deserving attention for the beauty, accuracy and memorability of their language, as well as their feelings and ideas." They "represent nothing less than a revolution, a fundamental change, in the art of poetry as it is practiced in this country"—and, if poets deserve attention for their feelings, a revolution in criticism as well.

As a devotee of poetic revolutions, formal or informal, I cracked the book at random, hoping for a new specter haunting America. But these were the first lines of the first poem I read:

> We stood on the rented patio
> While the party went on inside.
> You knew the groom from college.
> I was a friend of the bride. . .

Every revolution must lose a few skirmishes, so I flipped again, to a rebel sonnet:

> Four years ago I started reading Proust.
> Although I'm past the halfway point, I still
> Have seven hundred pages of reduced
> Type left before I reach the end. I will. . .

As Charles Reznikoff used to say, when I come to a poem like this, I turn the page. On to another sonnet, titled, unpromisingly, "The View from an Airplane at Night, Over California":

> This is a sight that Wordsworth never knew. . .

I had thought that this particular trope had been buried forever, forty years ago, by Kenneth Koch's famous parody of academic poetry: "This Connecticut landscape would have pleased Vermeer."

Turning the pages, there were too many titles that inspired me to turn the page: "On Leaving the Artist's Colony"; "Convalescing in London"; "Remembering the Ardèche"; "Grand Central Station, 20 December 1987" ("The clock's so huge you can watch the minute hand"); "Back Trouble" ("And so to bed. . .") "Approaching a Significant Birthday, He Peruses *The Norton Anthology of Poetry*"; "Moments of Summer"; an unironic "To Be Sung on the Fourth of July"; "Blue Jay" ("A sound like a rusty pump beneath our window/ Woke us at dawn.

Drawing the curtains back,/ We saw through milky light, above the doghouse—/ A blue jay lecturing a neighbor's cat."); "Dinner at Le Caprice"; "Those Paperweights with Snow Inside" (speaking of "accuracy," they're called snow globes) and so on through bland but happy career lives, now apparently available to poets, male and female, of all races, regions, and sexual preferences (all of which are represented here). The only note of incivility was a leering sexuality ("The Rapist's Villanelle," "Satyr, Cunnilinguent: To Herman Melville," "Victoria's Secret") that was creepy in its adolescent *frisson* of formalism and pseudo-lewdness, and entirely lacking in genuine perversity—as is found in that bizarre form-meister, Philip Larkin, who used to exchange spanking magazines with the expert on Stalin's atrocities.

But I paused at a numbing title, "The Lost Bee," because the line by Allen Tate which inspired the poem—"As a lost bee returning to the hive"—seemed to embody an eighth type of ambiguity, lack of sense. (As Mark Twain said, "I wasn't lost, just slightly misplaced.") "The Lost Bee" begins:

> When I returned to the hive I was one
> Among many, in a blistering hum.
> A braid of air had brought me far from home
> —Blinder than flowers, simpler than the sun. . .

The poem, involving some sort of first-person apian epiphany, was as bad as "braid of air" promises, but what interested me was its identification, in the forms index, as "envelope quatrains, iambic tetrameter, iambic pentameter." An envelope quatrain rhymes, like the elogists of the Dancing Queen, *abba,* as the first quatrain did (with a slight "off" on hum/home). The second quatrain had a second slight "off: curves/ serve and give/grave. But the third and then the fourth increasingly fell off the rhyme chart: god/strand, lose/skies, dance/space, and sense/ encodes. This was starting to look like that dreaded tennis without a net, free verse itself. Then I went back to the first quatrain, quoted above. The second line had only managed one iamb in its four feet—in athletics it would have been a disqualification. On the next page was a poem by the same author labeled as "alternating, envelope, and ballad quatrains, iambic trimeter." Five of the ten quatrains were none of these forms, and a stanza like "And the brightest halo/ Shrinks to a shadow/ Gray as a noose./ Intangible truths" was hardly iambic or trimetric.

I began to suspect that the vaunted strictures of the New Formalism were rather like the rules in a household with small children: tiny attempts at maintaining order, frequently reiterated, and rarely ob-

served. Very few Rebel Angels attempted anything more difficult than a sonnet, and only a few even tried their hands at these. Many of the poems merely kept to regular stanza forms, without rhyme—as countless "free verse" poems do. The rhymes themselves were astonishingly banal (brook/book, well/tell, park/dark, eye/sky, storm/warm, etc.); not a one even approached the wit of popular song: Bob Dylan ("the pump don't work/ 'cause the vandals/ took the handles") or Smokey Robinson or Moss Hart or Curtis Mayfield or John Lennon or nearly any song by Cole Porter ("Let's throw away anxiety, let's quite forget propriety,/ Respectable society, the rector and his piety,/ And contemplate l'amour in all its infinite variety,/ My dear, let's talk about love.").

And nearly every poem was written in three, four, or five feet of iambs. What is difficult, as Pound said at the beginning of the century, is not to write in iambs: "to break the HEAVE." After all, most of what we say in English is an unstressed monosyllabic personal pronoun or possessive or preposition or article followed by a stressed monosyllabic noun or verb (one iamb) or a disyllabic noun or verb stressed on its first syllable (one and a half iambs). Most polysyllabic words have alternating stresses. When one adds the permissible trochee at the beginning of the line, the permissible anapests anywhere, and all the other little infractions—exceptions that are supposed to make the rule—it may well be that the iamb is no more a formal quality than standard spelling.

Add to this the facts that the division into strictly stressed and unstressed syllables is inappropriate to English, that a line may have many possible scansions according to how it is read ("Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?"), and that off-rhymes, some quite farfetched, "count" in a rhyme-scheme, and we are left with a system of measurement as organic and untechnical as Williams' much-derided "variable foot" (which, by the way, is what English-language poets have always practiced). The only American formalists of the century may well turn out to be Louis Zukofsky, John Cage, and Jackson Mac Low, who invented their own, idiosyncratic and inflexible rules: placement of letters according to mathematical or mystical formulae, predetermined word lists and selection processes, and so on.

I'm sorry, but these Rebel Angels are wimps, cafe Republicans measuring out their lives in coffee spoons that keep changing size. For real formalism, we must go to the Old Formalism, to the days when forms were forms and form had nothing to do with etiquette. We must go back, that is, to the Vikings:

Viking formalism meant, for example, that to write a mere epitaph of ordinary statements and sentiments for a tomb—such as "Here lies a

warrior famed for his virtue. Denmark will never know a more honorable sea-captain, or one stronger in battle"—one began with a common stanza form, such as the *dróttkvatt.*

This stanza form had eight lines, broken into two half-stanzas of four lines, each expressing a single thought, that were, in turn, divided into two couplets. Each line had six syllables; only three could be stressed (and Old Norse, as one can imagine, had genuine stresses). The first line of each couplet had to have two stressed syllables that began with the same sound, which was also the sound of the first stressed syllable in the next line. (The other stressed syllables could not be alliterate.) The two stressed alliterative syllables in the first line could not rhyme; but the first stressed alliterative syllable in the second line had to rhyme with another syllable in the same line to which it was not alliterative.

The word order was completely unlike that of prose. For example, the structure of a normal prose sentence of 16 words (taking 1, 2, 3, etc., as the words in their proper prose order) looks like this in a relatively simple half-stanza:

2 4 5 3
1 8 9 6 7
12 10 13 14
11 15 16

In a more complex poem, poetic syntax is further stretched by fragmenting and reassembling the clauses. For example, back to the sea-captain and the first half-stanza. ("Here lies a warrior famed for his virtue. . .") The poet employs a *kenning,* or epithet, for warrior ("the one who carried out the work of Prudr, goddess of battles"), and the whole sentence reads literally: "Under this mound is hidden the one who carried out the work of Prudr, goddess of battles, whom the greatest virtues accompanied; most men knew that." (Though the Old Norse only has 15 words.)

The poem (keeping the literal English prose syntax) breaks this into something like:

Under this mound whom the greatest
most men knew that virtues
accompanied the one who carried out the work of Prudr
goddess of battles is hidden

The pattern of clauses is:

1 3
4 3
3 2
2 1

This was merely a tombstone epitaph, not a particularly memorable poem. It was written, as all poetry was, in a single line. (The ragged right-hand margin is a by-product of the availability of cheap paper.) There were no spaces between the words. The form of the poem was musically, not visually, evident—and evident to all its readers or listeners—and was only one of many such forms, most of them even more complex.

In a famous Icelandic story in the sagas, Hallbjörn of Pingvellir wanted to compose a poem in praise of a dead poet. He fell asleep on the poet's burial mound and dreamed that the mound opened, a tall man appeared, and said, "There you lie, Hallbjörn of Pingvellir, trying to do something you are incapable of doing—composing a poem in praise of me." The dead poet then taught Hallbjörn all the forms while he dreamed. They took many years to master, but in the end he wrote his poem.

# BRUCE BEASLEY

## TWO POEMS

### HERMETIC SELF-PORTRAIT

avoiding likeness and autobiographic gesture

1.

Mid-gut
of the imago, the instars'
moults. And the grasshopper
becomes a burden. In the suburbs, cicadas
seethe from the ground
every seventeen years

(forty thousand from the roots
of one tree)
to breed, and die.
And the empty skins
crackle everywhere underfoot,
tiny golden shells
hung on every surface.

Slough of the tough
carapace, dark thorax, red
front-margin of the wings
pumped full of juice.

Shriek. The ribbed
snaredrums of their abdomens—

the grackles are terrified
by their buzz-saw
song, the neighbors deafened by it. . .

Where am I
in this

emergence–

2.

Ground punctured with exit holes.
Convulsive
split of the husk: bulbous
eyes, and greasy wings–

This coming
out of oneself, for good, this
leaving hundred of eggs behind–

This leaving
a finished body behind. . .

Can a man bear a child,
Jeremiah asks,
the resurrection nymph's

disturbance-squawk. . .

3.

Can a man *bear*

a child. *Mutare,* to change. From which comes
*moult.* Their music-making
is a mating call, hollow
longing sound like *pharaoh, pharaoh–*

On my parents' tombstone, a dying cicada.
Having bred. It crawled up my pantsleg
when I touched it, the pitched

squeal of its brood around us–

No bouquet
laid down. I'm all out of *white* roses,
the florist had said,
I'm all out of *red* roses, too,
I don't have a single carnation left,

to be honest with you,
I'm plumb out of *every* kind of flower,

I don't even know why I'm here. . .

4.

Foghorn
as the music
of insomnia, sounding

all night from the whited-
out harbor
a mile away. . .

Mist in the nursery window,
three balloons tethered
to the new crib.

In the hall outside,
I stroke my mother's hair,
sealed into her still-life's

oilpaint, stray black S
through the pink carnation,
seventeen years

she's been gone. . . Warning
of the foghorn's hollow
four-second moan,

stilled music
of insomnia, means
of finding ground.

5.

Brood. To tell you the truth,
I'm plumb
out of incarnation,
crunched shells
of cicadas, empty
chitinous husks, the nymphs
tunneling into the loam, for a dormant
life. . .

Long wait
while the nursery fills
with hand-me-downs, with gifts—

(Ground littered with dead bodies, stiffened
wings)

Staring
at the fog-window,
drag of the white, half-visible balloons,

drag of scraggled
lines across the page:

I don't even know
why *I'm* here.

6.

Mid-gut
of the imago, the instars'
moults. And the grasshopper
a burden.

*Mutilus:* maimed. Mutation.
Mutatis mutandis, *the necessary*
*changes have been made.*

Your hurt is incurable, says the Lord.
Your pain is incurable,
and your wounds

I will heal–

So let me come
out of myself, a syncronous
burrowing out of the earth:

black S, still
life, crib's
white balloons, stridulous

*cry, long*
*deep tones in fog or darkness,*
pink painted carnation, seventeenth year

in this emergence. I make the sign
of the cross
over the two names on the grave,

over the belly-up cicada–then its wings
flapping wild in my face, my glasses knocked off–
Bear a child, bear a child

underground, mutable
carapace, twigs drilled full of eggs–
imago, white roses,

abandoned exit
holes, the moult
incurable, necessary: plumb

out. . .

## SERMONS ON UNBELIEF

Sermons on unbelief ever did
attract me–
–Emily Dickinson

I.

Good Friday. Blood orange and Billie Holiday.
The cross adored, in the streets: torchlight
on cobblestone, huddles of brown-hooded monks.
Hushed procession of believers. I watched
the bearer of the wooden cross
watch me, through a restaurant's purple curtains:
day of fasting, splayed meat on a plate,
empty beaker of wine. At three,
under the sacred, bell-jarred head
of St. Catherine, I tried, in slurred Italian,
to ask a priest where the services were;
he directed me to the restroom. Service

of redemption: Stations of the Cross
on primetime TV, crucifix of fire on the Colisseum walls.
Then blues, and fruit. Drill-whine and hammer-on-metal
of restoration in San Domenico: we waited
half the afternoon for the services
that never began, and translated
a newspaper story about thirty-nine dead
of applesauce and phenobarbitol,
who believed a spaceship from comet Hale-Bopp
would take them to a higher evolution. Hushed
procession of believers. Purple
handkerchiefs over their faces.
Credevano di essere angeli. . .
A priest slapped the paper, told me
this was a place for prayer.

All day we'd been looking for converters
for the blowdryer, the laptop.
Watching souls crawl out of Limbo
at the touch of the harrowing Christ.
Higher evolution. Museum guard,
when we asked her what "castita" meant,
said "non fare niente, non fare il sesso"—
Not doing anything. Not having sex.
The cult's leader had himself castrated.
In the allegory of Chastity, the virtuous
hunch their bodies against Love; Cupid
aims, anyway, from his pit of flames.
Billie Holiday. Non fare il sesso.
The flaming swordtips of Eden,
closed. How Adam and Eve
recoil, even in Limbo, from Christ.
Already harrowed. Telnet
statler.cc.wwu.edu: the longing for e-mail's
transmundane conversion of phonewire and byte.
Lux Mundi. Cybercafe,
500 lire per minute online. Converting
lire to dollars, liters to gallons, lux
mundi to luce del mondo.

The light shone in the darkness and the darkness knew it not.
Mea maxima culpa. Imagine
what an insane cult the Romans
must have thought the Christians were,
the Son of God flown down from heaven
to rescue us from our sins. . .: Easter feast,
all our talk's about the Heaven's Gate
cult. Castrated faithful heaped in their villa.
Believing themselves to be angels. Non fanno niente.

II.

Palm Sunday Mass, Rome, Santa
Maria degli Angeli:
sun-stab through one panel of stained
glass (saint's-face in scarlet) over
the convert frescoed by the altar. Whose arms
reach toward a wingbeat of angels. Sun's
burned circle around the dim
figure, till all I could see
was one hand, blistered toward the angel's
receding flock of wing and gown.
Palms wilted on the pews
of the church converted from Diocletian's
tepidarium baths. Ten people at Mass,
newspapers under their arms. This
is a place of prayer. Convert
eradicated in her ring of fire,
while the little bell jangled in
the Transubstantiation

into flesh.
I'd spent the morning looking for an ATM.
Sportello automatico. Electric
candles in their banks under an altar.
Where the service is. Exposed
buttocks of a guard in Sodoma,

at the base of the cross. Cleft where the painter's real
obsession lay.
The body they're hauling down with ropes
and pulleys meant nothing compared to the taut
musculature of the thighs, the near
transparence of the uniform
over the ass. Sodom,
ashheaps, pillar of salt. The Deposition's
a project for engineers, all ballast and angle.
How to get down from the cross. When we learn how to die,
Montaigne said, we'll unlearn how to be slaves.
Hale-Bopp over via Cassia, its tail of endless arrival.
Heaven's Gate on the Internet, click and you'll learn
how to die.

Blood orange. Billie Holiday. Gloomy Sunday.
My heart and I have decided to end it all.
O triumphant holy day. Then another
hallelujah. God, with the Cross in His hands.
Spattered blood at the nailholes. Adored. Bring me a mustard
seed,
said the Buddha to a woman whose child had died,
from any house that has never known death, and I'll raise
him.
She wandered the city, counting the dead
from each family. Ashheaps, pillar of salt. Kingdom
of heaven like a mustard seed. Dwell in the wounds
of Christ, the *Imitation* advises.
The feat of getting the body down from the cross:
levers, pulleys, ropes, hard
strain in the muscles of the buttocks.
Heaped bodies. Then another hallelujah, and an amen.

III.

Drill-whine of restoration. This
business of bringing down the divine:
Michelangelo's made his self-portrait

in Nicodemus, hauling Christ off the cross. Dwell
in the wounds. Spark
of graphite as he chipped the marred
block of marble. Then smashed Christ's body,
disgusted with the stone that never would yield
the human image. Che bel
marmo hai rovinato. Christ, missing one leg.
Monk under the cross, faceless and staring from his brown hood.
In the Gate of Paradise, God and the angels
together yank Eve out of Adam's side. Hard
labor. Already harrowed. Angel wings
hide Adam's genitals, during the Temptation. Not doing anything, not having sex.
And it burned, burned, burned,
the ring of fire. Down the divine. Cain bludgeons Abel, Abraham
yanks Isaac by the hair and bares the rough knife to his neck.
What failed human images. Phenobarbitol
and applesauce.

Gate of Paradise, replaced
panel by panel with copies.
The door itself is a reproduction now. You can't
trust anything you look at
in Italy, it's all a fake,
my barber said. They're scared
somebody will smash the real statues so they've got them locked up in a vault.
You might as well just look in a book. Resplendent
shadows of Plato's cave. The imitation
advises. Webpage of Heaven's Gate, help thou my unbelief.
Logged on, and on. Shed
our flesh and rise to the mother
ship. Untouchable angel. Mary
hovers over the iron nails through the feet
somewhere in the Uffizi. Touches them, like Thomas.
Annunciation without lilies. She believes. Heaped
bodies, reliquary of miscellaneous saints:

femur, finger, knucklebone. The missing leg of Christ.
Both of Paul's index fingers, in separate jars in one room.
You can't trust anything you look at, it's all a fake.

IV.

Eve, in Masaccio, covers her genitals; Adam, only his eyes.
It's too late not to be naked. Not too late to be blind.
You get fifteen minutes to see the Brancacci Chapel,
with thirty other people (locked up in a vault).
Elbowing for a view of Expulsion.
Trying to remember who paid who the Tribute Money,
why Adam and Eve are in the scene, why Peter's upside
down.
Till the guard blinks his light, says it's time, and you go.

All day we'd spent looking for a converter. Old ladies
shoving and kicking their way to the Host
at Easter Mass. This is my flesh. Hale-Bopp,
star-smear over the harrowed field.
I stared a long time to make sure I knew what I saw.
Next to the comet, red Mars. Hail and farewell. Eat this
so that sins may be forgiven. Why not,
why not give them back where they came from, Eve
uncoiling out of Adam's side. Snapped whips of the angels.
The noble Bevesangue, who liked to lick the blood from his
sword.
Abraham's jagged knife. Dwell. Blood of the new and
everlasting
covenant.

Peter's upside down. The cock
in the castle's barnyard down the street
crows at three in the afternoon. It's time.
Three confident betrayals, and then shame.
Eve in Masaccio, Judas
in any Last Supper. Moneybag tied to his side.
The bread, grained and red in the wine.

Torches, hooded face, splayed lamb,
this is a place of prayer.
St. Thomas, in Orsanmichele,
stumbles toward the hole in Christ's side.
His right foot standing on nothing, overstepping its niche
over my head. That's faith, launching
himself toward proof of the gash, his whole balance resting
on air.
Blessed are they who have not
seen, but have believed. Phenobarbitol,
shed flesh. He's the merchants'
patron saint. Business of redemption. That never would yield
the human image. That's why
Adam and Eve are in the scene. Sermons
on unbelief ever did attract me
toward and toward (unsteady) the inhuman wound.

# NANCY LOCKE

## SOME POSSIBILITIES FOR PAINTING'S NEW TOPOGRAPHIES

One might point to the late nineteenth-century artist who dreamed of a painting that actually realized the materiality of things: a way of painting in which the artist forgot what the mind knew and isolated the evanescent sensations of what the eye perceived. Not that the mind's knowledge could actually *be* banished from the work, but a way of working might be found in which the purely optical would be privileged. Oddly enough, at the end of the twentieth century, the contemporary painter also privileges the "optical," but not in the same way. Today, the optical might stand for an access to a world perceived not by the eye, but by various imaging technologies; the optical might be marshaled, but it might also be heavily manipulated and made to take its place in an order determined by a theoretical construct. Christopher Campbell neither begins from a theoretical construct nor from the empirical in its raw form; rather, he readdresses the relationship between them in terms of what contemporary painting might set out to do.

Representational painting locates itself along a continuum between the illusionistic and the schematic. On one end of the spectrum is complete verisimilitude: the proverbial bird pecking at the painted grapes; on the other end, representation as writing, as code, as diagram. In one case, the artist attempts to mimic the seen; in the other, the relationship between figure and referent is arbitrary and must be understood by the viewer as such. In many ways, abstract painting is no different. In the sense that most abstract painting does have sources and representational goals and content, abstract painting too can be understood as navigating between the poles of illusion and schema. Cézanne's late unfinished canvases, for example, have the look of abstraction even while every patch of color remains tied to the artist's project of registering his "sensations"; even Mondrian's black lines have their roots in landscape and architecture. Abstract painting from forty or fifty years ago can be seen as imitative of a certain emotiveness, for instance, or of pure improvisation, but these forms of mimesis are not much seen in painting today.

Christopher Campbell's early work had clear roots in nature: sketches made in the Fontainebleau forest, on the Connecticut shores, or in thickets around southeastern Michigan, where he now lives and works. He slowly inventoried brushstrokes of past masters: a *tâche* here from French landscape painting of the turn-of-the-century, a calligraphic mark à la Joan Mitchell, a thrown line from Pollock. These investigations gave way to new interests and innovations: the hand gesticulating without the eye's corrections, a brush made from a few stalks of bound prairie grasses creating unplanned irregularities in the marks, a fat baton of charcoal dipped in medium in order to make it smear and spread its marks even as they were being made. In the early '90s, the studious, contemplative nature of Marden's work became a reference point. Campbell's interest in nature was only partly an issue of content; it could perhaps best be understood as a contact with *newness,* with the complexities of forms and hues determined in nature. It remains tied to a desire to avoid, at all costs, painting from any sort of *a priori* notion or procedure.

Christopher Campbell's childhood in upstate New York was spent between his father's painting studio and the shores of Lake Ontario. Before devoting himself to painting, Campbell studied the history of art at the graduate level after spending years producing documentary film and media presentations. As a Fulbright Fellow in France, Campbell undertook dissertation research on Pissarro and Cézanne, but then encountered the American emigrée Joan Mitchell, who lived northwest of Paris in Vétheuil. Mitchell offered Campbell studio space and took him on as a student. He would work with her off and on for three years before her death in 1992. Her acerbic wit and advice during Campbell's student years enabled him to work through the legacies of Abstract Expressionism—especially the work of Pollock and De Kooning—that held such interest for him, and to reformulate the problems facing contemporary art having come to terms with painting's history.

In painting today, the individual mark is almost never identified with authority or authenticity. Minimalism and conceptual art have seen to that. A prime example would be the work of Gerhard Richter. He not only challenges the claims of abstraction through a continued dialogue with photographic mimesis (a project invested not in fresh empirical observation, but in the recycling of preexisting representations), but also his abstract paintings do not depend on the form of a given gesture. Even Marden's patient work on paper, with its faith in topographies of shells, stones, or ripples on water, can be seen as tipping the balance away from mimesis and toward a kind of writing.

In Campbell's most recent work, the artist might begin a piece by asserting the potency of the mark, whether in an aggressive gesture or in a passage of delicate tracery. These linear sequences, with their roots in Pollock and Marden, are then effaced by a swathe of color; they are bathed in a field of light, or troweled over with a plaque of white or black. It is as if a lens were focused on the intricacies of stems and leaves, only to allow its aperture to open and, in a double exposure, to capture the spray of light over the branches in the wildest play of magnification.

The image of the wide-open lens is not a conceit. Campbell does undertake motif and composition studies by taking a camera through forests and down deer trails. There he observes the distortions of color and form that extremes of weather and light will render: a red osier dogwood branch seen at dawn becomes brilliant cadmium red. Through a lens focused at a point in front of the tree, the slender branch becomes a cadmium beam of light; a patch of sunlit sky seeps brilliantly over the dark trunk; leaves turning to catch the light take their places in glimmering constellations. The light-writing that is photography sets a challenge for the translucencies of oil paint and alkyd gel: can these most pellucid of painterly media somehow respond to such ephemeral effects? It is a question Monet would have asked of himself and his brushes, but then Monet would have wanted the image of the dogwood to be clearly readable on the canvas. The nineteenth-century painter may have been interested in "effects," but they were effects of a Real all the same, and a certain faith in the concrete reality of the Real was maintained to the end.

Is it fair to say that the contemporary painter no longer believes in the Real? That would appear to be the case in looking at a number of artists who involve perceptual questions in their work. One thinks not only of Richter's interest in the status of the reproduced image, but also of Ross Bleckner's melodramatic allegories, Mark Francis' brush dragged through magnified bacteria. These very different artists maintain touchstones in some level of optical perception, but also explore discontinuities between that which a painting sets out to represent and the nature of the physical or technological apparatus deployed. One can no longer apply Gombrich's terms of making and matching: the latter is simply no longer the goal of the former. The relationship between Campbell's blurred abstractions and his motif studies is similarly one of dissonance, not replication.

In addition to the structures suggested in Campbell's own motif photographs, those from the world of medical imagery have become an interest. In some of his more recent work, the artist frequently turns

to the domain of the body, of computed tomography or photomicrographic imagery in order to discover cellular structures or tissue compositions in which a complex network is suggestive both of order or function, on the one hand, and nearly chaotic irregularity on the other. These most recent works continue what one might call his critique of representational fidelity to a perceptual apparatus, but they transfer the locus of that critique from exterior nature to interior nature, from the vegetal to the animal. In place of the rotating axis of a branch or the shimmer of a leaf, the pulse between dendritic nerves is suggested; in place of a screen of trees, one finds a complex of neurons that informs the work's structure.

The artist's desire to exploit the extraordinary translucency captured in the nature photographs has led him not only to new techniques but also to new media. In the domain of painting, Christopher Campbell now frequently works on large sheets of polyester sailcloth, a semi-translucent support that admits light from behind the work and makes it part of the ground. The painting's "reserve," first tantalizingly revealed and valued by the Romantics, has now become an almost intangible presence in paintings such as *Screen I (Black);* the reserve is an element of immateriality at play in an otherwise terrifically material mode of painting. Campbell's use of sailcloth not only enables him to move paintings away from the wall and to display them, scroll-like, hanging from machined aluminum brackets, but also to experiment with the chromaticism of monochromatic works. Whereas color has always come easily to him and been a strong point in his work, the sailcloth paintings possess an inherent luminosity that allows for a range of subtle hues and values shifting from an ostensibly single hue. *Screen I (Black)* is almost completely black on a white ground, but out of the black come green-grays, warm grays, and blue grays to supply all the colorism it needs. The sailcloth paintings, as well as Axon Bundle, a painting on transparent Mylar, emerge as deconstructions of the paintings' support. Without an opaque ground layer, the physical assertiveness of oil painting, instead of appearing embedded in its five centuries of tradition, dances and floats over the lightness of the sailcloth. Figure does not merely posit itself on ground; instead, the ground stands for the potential unraveling of the figure.

Work on paper has become a forum for similar maneuvers. *Suspension VIII (Soma)* combines the layering of sheer veils of white and gray that barely reveal blue and flesh tones underneath. Over these layers is a spray of drawing: a few black lines that suggest a set of biomorphic forms. The play between figure and ground undoes the certainty of either one. An illusion of spatiality exists in a dialectical relation with the drawing-as-writing on the surface.

Christopher Campbell has recently moved outside a concentration on painting alone. After a collaboration with a choreographer to create a set design for a dance production, Campbell went on to work with friends on video and photographic installations. These projects have in various ways involved body imagery. The artists' cooperative Skate, of which Campbell is a member, is currently engaged in exploring what Foucault has described as the subversive nature of friendship.[1] The artists in Skate photograph themselves and each other so as to create ambiguous juxtapositions of bodies and identities. The photographs are then projected in an installation filled with objects from everyday life. Viewers can retrace and even experience the artists' activities as they contemplate the images, montaged or superimposed on one another so as to complicate their status as discrete art objects.

Not reproduced here are Campbell's latest studies for paintings on sailcloth, in which the support is bent, curved, doubled, or shaped to create a viewing environment. The possibilities for painting to pick up where the *Nymphéas* left off are apparent. For what confronts the viewer here is not an oversized *tableau,* but an art that questions painting's status in light of Minimalism: painting as an art takes on installation. These are works that attempt to revise the status of painting as a luxury object, as a commodity with which members of a certain class adorn their walls. One thinks of Richter's statement: "And I see myself as the heir to an enormous, great, rich culture of painting, and of art in general, which we have lost, but which nevertheless obligates us."[2] The pressure to push painting's envelope is palpable here; "painting should be accomplishing more," says Richter. As an artist who has extensively studied the history of art, Christopher Campbell too feels a sense of cultural obligation. Painting somehow must continue to be rich and expressive even as it faces the artistic and political forces that have transformed and critiqued it in the last century and a half. It cannot do so, believes Campbell, by simply retreating from illusion and mimesis in favor of cerebral schemae. It must shift the territories of what kinds of illusions it might create: not abstraction for its own sake but a formal language that actually provides an account of experience. Campbell wants to find ways of describing somatic experience, hence his interests in nature and the body, hence his experiments with new materials, new levels of the optical, new modes of presentation. The external and internal worlds of Campbell's subjects suggest possibilities for somatic experiences that the forms of his art have begun to chart.

## Notes

1 See Michel Foucault, "Friendship as a Way of Life," trans. John Johnston, in *The Essential Works of Michel Foucault; Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth, vol. I,* edited by Paul Rabinow (NY: The New Press, 1997), pp. 135-140.

2 From an interview with Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, trans. Stephen Duffy, in *Art in Theory, 1900-1990,* ed. Charles Harrison and Paul Wood (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1993), p. 1038.

# CHRISTOPHER CAMPBELL

## FOUR PAINTINGS

**Dark Brush (Waterloo), 1995**
*Oil, charcoal/linen, 38 x 50",*
*Herbert Barrows, Ann Arbor, Michigan*

**Suspension VIII (Soma), 1996-97**
*Oil, oilstick, charcoal/paper, 30.6 x 23.1",*
*R Epping, Zurich, Switzerland*

**Screen I (Black), 1997**
*Oil, alkyd resin/polyester, 76 x 59.8",*
*collection of the artist*

**Axon Bundles, 1997**
*Oil, alkyd resin, oilstick/Mylar, 84 x 60",*
*collection of the artist*

# CHARLES BERNSTEIN

## CAPTAIN CAPPUCCINO AND HIS MERRY CON LECHES

*I'm not telling you what you can't do*
*but what you can do.*
The station moves rapidly on the tracks
looking for the frame. Amid clangs
of threaded openings, barrage of having
known flickers acidly in the tell-tale
mirage of another way in. Ripple
of same that is always swapping
for marbleized fairy dust. But
let's not get sentimental. Go
blow, go below and examine the hypothesis
as it burns its way into the deep
structurelessness that buoys
the girls and makes men sweep. EXPECTORATE
IDEOLOGY: write piteously and deliver
yourself to sullen beauty, elliptical
judgments. Zeroing in for the spill.
Verb forms in the mouth, scum of sequence,
sentence, skirmish. Borders on asphalt,
your fault, my fault. Darting
in a delicious divertimento to
absent tablature, turbidity, luster.
Hearken to the choir of broken
wings—not the ones who
sing but the drawer on the other
side, open to the blank page
smudged with tacit misconstruals.
For if I delay it is not to
betray the secret writ in mars & furls
on the floor of the roiling

machine, funneled in flax.
Never (next to) coniferous
cohabitation, the principled pealing
that traps the aquatic ambiance
of the parasitic constabularies,
mystic launch of listening's
particle imagination. Blip
blip blip. Huddled against
percolation, futurity on the
bend, irritating (irrigating)
pitched surrender.

# JAMES HELLER LEVINSON

## ISAAC STERN THURSDAY APRIL 23, 1998 8:00

scooped out of ancient wall this image now man wolfs
to center stage two legs abandoned
—a retraction unperceived—
stooped in semi-squat he faces the audience
nods
—skull hacked shaped assembled *[the basis of mastery is retrieval]*
through asteroidal loops of history—
first hearing Segovia then in his 70s—
masterful, commanding—
who wouldn't be heard—no
hacking coughs, programs rustling, conversational exchanges—
until he heard the proper conditions for hearing
—as the still hunter attends,
focuses into view,
the congregation of animal powers,
assesses angulation,
times the ripeness to strike,
to release the arrows of horizon—
in the quieting down, the audience releasing
temporal concerns, gathering devotional data seldom summoned,
Segovia, a study in preparation-ING (prepar-ed-NESS),
plumbs lacunae, cavitous ocean,
warps of sacred infinitude shuttle his face
loose holy lariats bucking wildly and irresponsible. . .
fingers arch (snake recoil)
*—[the exercise of art is redistribution]—*

the nail–hoof of culture–
frosts string

Isaac Stern born 1920 debut 1935
(early entries are claimants)
begins: Bach Sonata in E minor for Violin & Keyboard
this man you would want to help across
the street
with violin to chin, the first swipe
of the bow, the darting lizard-tongued attack sprinting
archaeology
of fingers
(rapid canine copulation)
urgently virilizes
dis-PUTES the clawing white arms orange hands
lunging
through floorboards gravity's stampede intent unrelenting
in their argument: 'erect is provisional'–
choirs of fingers-delirious resist,
crunch negation,
fret the braids of a loot destiny,
(angels reeling)
pumped with ventricular wisdom
crazed with a life all their own
the human document determined to ink impermeable

# MILTON KESSLER

## TWO POEMS

### DANCING LESSON

Each daybreak I reach to take medicines
losing balance
at the edge of her bed.
Then bend to polish
jewels
in the kitchen
sink
and send up
mist of coffee to her
and settle
with my bowl of grains.
Only after I've finished
does she rub her bad knee
and descend
to the oval oak table
and calendar
of today.

Here by the one sunny window I read,
*The Tsurezuregas of Kenkō:* 1330–1332
"The Holyman of Kume lost his magic power
to fly after noticing the legs

of a girl washing clothes."
I watched a woman hanging sheets
on a windy roof in the Bronx.
They were white as
painted feet
of Asian slaves
on sale in Rome.

## ACCOMPANIED

*"Paintings are not properly seen*
*in galleries but only in the solitude*
*and wholeness of their studios."*
Pousette-Dart

Hush. On whitewashed wall
a huge furry moth
the color of mammal
sleeps through noon and tomorrow.

My large stomach and sides pain
and I need to see a doctor
but rain is driving even sparrows
into high grass hiding and ground
cannot swallow the sky-gift pooling.
Now it is bones that ache
as I move my shoulder painting rain.

Poor God, we are sick and tired,
so I'll build us a glass of tea.

The four frightened sisters lie
hand in hand
on an iron bed in Brooklyn.
Only Betty, a mother, still wakes.

When you have nobody
it inhibits travel.
Like the soul you linger
by the freed dead body.

Passing 24 tiles of sunshine
on scoured corridor wall,
the buttressed windows
sealed and webbed.

# COMMENTARY

## "The economy of passions": Mina Loy and Basil Bunting

The most surprising letter of all those received during the time I spent writing the life of Mina Loy came from Basil Bunting. Jonathan Williams, Loy's publisher and Bunting's friend, had given me his address in a remote part of England. Despite Bunting's reputation as a recluse, I wanted to ask about his Ode 17, dedicated to Loy in 1930. I recognized the "Oval face, thin eyebrows wide of the eyes" of the third stanza, but other lines were puzzling. I inquired tactfully about their relationship even though it seemed unlikely that he would answer.

The three page, single spaced typed missive that came by return post was as hilarious as it was unexpected. Memory is a liar, Bunting warned me. He had known Loy but not well; his recollections of expatriate Paris were to be taken "with a great many grains of salt." Ode 17 was "a product of memory, and was not even addressed to recording facts." "Nothing in it," he went on, was "more than metaphor except the description of her face."

Bunting wrote this poem some years after they met—most likely in 1923, when the twenty-three year old poet was working as Ford Madox Ford's underpaid assistant at the *transatlantic review.* At that time he imagined the forty-one year old Loy to be twice his age. Five decades later, Bunting regretted that he "had never tried to make love to her" (adding in a self-deflating note, "I expect she would have laughed at me"). Nonetheless, he confirmed her presence in Ode 17:

> Oval face, thin eyebrows wide of the eyes,
> a premonition in the gait
> of this subaqueous persistence
> of a particular year—
> for you had prepared it for preservation
> not vindictively, urged
> by the economy of passions.

While Bunting did not gloss the "subaqueous persistence/of a particular year," for the biographer these lines evoke Loy's protracted grief over her husband's disappearance: the poet, boxer, and proto-Dadaist Arthur Cravan—the love of her life—probably drowned in 1918 as they were attempting to leave Mexico. Despite Loy's gaiety at expatriate gatherings, her mourning continued unabated, preserved, even "urged/ by the economy of passions."

Bunting's letter recalls Loy's emotional state but says little about their literary affinities—except that he was pleased by her encouragement of his "pretensions to poetry." Both were specimens of that rare breed, English modernists, though at the time Bunting was too young in his craft to think of himself that way, and both benefited from the sponsorship of Pound. That both were also voluntary exiles created a bond. During the early twenties, Loy was creating a container for her anger at her mother country in *Anglo-Mongrels and the Rose,* her long free verse diatribe then appearing in installments in the *Little Review.* By the end of the decade, the two poets' short social satires would appear together in the pages of *Pagany:* Loy's "Lady Laura in Bohemia" dissects a wellborn Englishwoman's "somersault descent/into the half-baked underworld" and Bunting's "A Cracked Record" chides a lover in the throes of romance, "We others are divorced at heart/soon, soon! wrenched apart by wretched bickerings."

The expatriate literary world Loy and Bunting shared before their own wrenching apart is affectionately evoked from the vantage point of age in Bunting's letter, which deserves to be quoted in its entirety:

107 Stridingedge
Blackfell
Washington
Tyne and Wear

3 July 1980

Dear Carolyn Burke

Yours is the first letter for a long time to catch my interest.

As to Mina Loy, I cant help you in any way that would be of interest to your ultimate readers. I never knew anything about her, since even then I didnt like to concern myself with the private lives of my friends. I knew her only a very short time; and not well at all well, since she must have been nearly twice my age which set a narrow limit to

intimacy. And in the second place, memory is, I believe, a chronic liar, not very far from fiction (think of any novelist you know—all liars), so that what I think I recollect is certainly not to be relied on. Take it with a great many grains of salt.

The poem you mention was itself a product of memory, and was not even addressed to recording facts. Nothing in it is more than metaphor except the description of her face, which you have already noted, and which may easily have been distorted by the eight years or so which already stood between my and my last sight of her. I was sorry that I had never tried to make love to her, though I expect she would have laughed at me.

I cant remember how I met her. There's a very vague suggestion in my mind that I was in company with Brancusi, the only one of the great artists of that time with whom I had more than a nodding acquaintance; but perhaps it is more likely that I was introduced by Ford Madox Ford, who introduced me to so many people. I was enormously struck by her beauty, a dark, melancholy beauty that didnt sentimentalise itself as so much female beauty does. Somehow I got invited to tea and cakes where she lived and then took every chance I got of calling on her or of sitting by her in tha[t] cafe, watching her face rather than talking; though probably I chattered as sillily as very young men do. She put up with it. She even let me imagine that she liked it, though she was probably amused at my pretensions to poetry, yet seemed to treat me seriously. So I was at least half in love with her—the only time I have ever had such feelings for a woman older than myself.

I dont know what she talked about, though it must have been in some sense encouraging. I dont remember who else she saw, though I am sure that sometimes Robert McAlmon was about and nearly sure that Berenice Abbot also appeared, though I liked Berenice so much that I may merely have associated her in my memory with someone else I liked. She too deserved to be remembered and recorded.

After a few months of this curious friendship, never seeing much of her, Ford told me one day that Mina's daughter was coming from Italy and sent me to greet her with a bouquet. Joella was beautiful too (and very conscious of it, I think) so that I found myself split as it were,

between mother and daughter. I even imagine, looking back, though I cant have guessed it at the time, that the errand with the bouquet had been planned by Ford and Mina together as a likely way to rid Mina of my altogether too young attentions. I felt as much attached to her as ever, but it was Joella I now wanted to make up to. I think Mrs Bayer must remember me, perhaps with tolerance, perhaps only with amusement.

Then Ford gave a great party, which served to return a great deal of hospitality offered him and to gather many of the contributors to the Transatlantic Review, but which he also intended to be a chance for me to dance with Joella all the evening. Unfortunately Ford didnt know that the very old-fashioned Quaker school at which I had been brought up regarded dancing as a sin, or almost a sin, so that I never learned how, but had to watch Joella dancing most of the evening with Tristan Tzara. I never spoke to Tzara again, though we had been good cafe companions for a while. Mina tried to make up for this by a little intimate party where I could show off, and it was suggested that Joella should teach me to dance. I dont think anything came of the suggestion, but am not sure.

I went on seeing them for a while; but I was due to leave Paris soon. Then there was a great party when all the Americans gathered together—an embassy affair or something else semiofficial, and Mina Loy got me invited to it. I had had enough drink already to set free my taste for mischief, then very active. When I came in some American lady, goodness knows who, introduced me to a very august looking female sitting with another like her in full evening regalia with a very cutaway bodice. She was said to be the wife of the missionary bishop of somewhere or other. As she held out her hand for it to be kissed in the French fashion I reached beyond it and scooped her exuberant bosom out of its corsage. Scandal. She, however, seemed to like it, set about to drinking a great deal, and was presently doing cartwheels on the dancing floor. The scandal of the bishopess (or whatever you call her) was at its worst just as Mina Loy and Joella arrived. Joella ordered me home and I went off in disgrace. I have seen this incident described in some reminiscence of the time, but without names. It gave great pleasure to the cafes, but when I thought how angry Mina and Joella must be, I was

in despair, so that I put forward my departure from Paris and left at once.

That was a mistake; for the very first letter that was forwarded after me was Joella's invitation to tea. I suppose I was forgiven. But I never saw either mother or daughter again, and I am not sure that I even wrote to them. Seven or eight years later I sent them each a copy of *Redimiculum Matellarum,* my first pamphlet, but again I cant remember whether or not either of them acknowledged it.

That is the whole of my acquaintance with Mina Loy and her daughter. I can tell you no more and I dont think telephoned questions would be more likely to stir any more memories.

Of course I read many of her poems. I still have the *Lunar Baedeker* McAlmon printed. But they have largely faded from my memory and I dont think I can profitably say anything about them now. I thought very highly of them at the time.

I am afraid this is all about me and hardly at all about Mina Loy. For that I must apologise; but I hope may at least entertain you for a moment and give an impression of some of the environs of her life.

I would be very pleased to see your biography when it is done. Let me know of it. I suppose you are already in touch with Jonathan Williams (Corn Close, Dentdale, Sedbergh, Cumbria) who is very interested in Mina Loy and all that concerns her.

Yours faithfully,
B Bunting

Forgive senile typing, senile irrelevance.

There is little to say after reading such a letter, except that it makes me laugh each time I reread it. Despite Bunting's postscript, I relied on it to evoke "the environs" of Loy's life in Paris during the 1920s as well as the "limit to intimacy." Moreover, its recollection of Bunting's complicated feelings for both Joella and Mina helped me grasp a recurrent pattern in her life—one that would be restaged during the 1930s and '40s in her relations with Joella's husband, the Surrealist art dealer Julien Levy (who was himself at least half in love with Mina) and in her friendship with the German Surrealist Richard Oelze, the younger man and potential soulmate who haunts her novella *Insel.*

Bunting did not live long enough to see how he had helped me: he died in 1985, ten years before I completed the book. Since then I have often thought about what he said. If memory is not far from fiction, neither is biography. Of necessity one fabricates a tapestry from the threads—letters, memoirs, interviews, documents—that survive. In this sense, composing a life is an act of assemblage, combining found materials, discards, detritus, throwaways—much like Loy's own practice in the applied and domestic arts she turned to when not writing. I think of another of Ode 17's "metaphors" for Loy's passions:

> Nobody said: She is organising
> these knicknacks her dislike collects
> into a pattern nature will adopt and perpetuate.

Bunting's prediction that their acquaintance would not continue ("Very likely I shall never meet her again/ or if I do, fear the latch as before") proved to be correct. But more importantly, their poetic affinity has gone unrecognized until quite recently. Jim Powell ("Basil Bunting and Mina Loy," *Chicago Review,* Winter 1990) discusses them as two neglected poets whose writing is "essential." Kathleen Fraser ("'Contingent Circumstances': Mina Loy/Basil Bunting," in *Mina Loy: Woman and Poet,* forthcoming) sets their words in dialogue before noting commonalities—their "dense thicket[s] of word/song/syntax," their peculiarly English way of "addressing the sexual/eroticized body in frank pleasure and wariness." Despite the limits to intimacy posed by their work, these poets' poets are at last finding those who hear their mixture of tones (what Fraser calls "a satiric and skeptical watchfulness [that] resides next to readiness for encounter")—readers for whom their shared "economy of passions" voices the vulnerability within the careful condensations of modernist artifice.

—CAROLYN BURKE

***Moving Borders: Three Decades of Innovative Writing by Women.*** **Mary Margaret Sloan, editor, (Jersey City: Talisman House, Publishers), 1998, ISSBN 1-883689-47-3; $27.95, 740 pages.**

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I often wonder what masochism propels ordinary people into the making of anthologies. Editors of anthologies work like mules, they spend months if not years tracking down the perfect texts to illustrate their theories, they dicker with estates and with the egos of the individual talents, they're bombarded by galleys that bulge and erupt in a thousand places, they promote the work of others instead of writing their own, they pay huge permission fees with little hope of recuperation, and in the end, what happens? The book gets published, and they get raked over the coals, losing all their friends in the process. If I had to do one I'd make damn sure I had a co-editor, one on whom I could blame all the "mistakes." And yet we live in an age of anthologies, and depend on them to define the temper of the times; perhaps we resent this dependence and feel sadistically compelled to lash out at those whose labors indefatigable brought them to our door. Biting the hand that feeds us. In the post-modern age, especially, when we don't have enough time to read a whole book by one person, an anthology satisfies as does nothing else. The other day we were trying to reconstruct what life was like before the invention of the remote control; weren't people more likely to watch the same network all night long, rather than having to get up and change the stations manually? (I *think* with some kind of *knob* actually set into the television box.) And then it became an addiction, once we had that wand in our hands. What does not change is the will to change channels. Therefore wherever it crops up, to all possible results, let us salute the heroic masochism that fuels our ease. An anthology is a novel disguised; under its surface roil all the complications of Balzac, the allegiances, the compromises, the back stories of long standing and the sudden twists of fortune, the betrayals and the madness and the passion.[1]

*Moving Borders* is a rich, colorful and intriguing collection, culled from hundreds of sources high and low, groundbreaking in its sweep and ambition. Dipping from page to page, at random, one feels one's eyes literally widen, both with the shock of the new and the shock of recognition, for one had known in some intellectual corner of the brain that this writing was emerging, but the sheer presence of so much of it under two covers—its object status—is stunning, like a blow to the

body. Its selling point, and maybe its controversial point, is that it's all by women.

Over the past twelve or fifteen years it's happened again and again, at places where poets meet, outside this or that non-profit space; on the fire escape of a downtown loft; at the Xerox factory. You'll be standing there while Poet X or Y-Male stubs out a cigarette and announces casually, "Best poetry nowadays is all by women." Grinding that cigarette butt with his heel. This announcement has become such a cliche it's hard to tell how to hear it anew; in fact, perhaps conscious of its pervasiveness, men don't say that so much any more. Novelty use shrinking? *Moving Borders* has the novelty of hearing a woman, Mary Margaret Sloan, making the same remark (though nowhere in her thoughtful introduction is this explicit. Indeed, she declares that for the first time in poetic history "a roughly equivalent number of women and men are publishing the most significant and demanding work of the moment.") This book—produced at a time when it is no longer necessary—or so Sloan's provocative apothegm has it—situates itself as a marker in time and the history of culture. The book situates itself, perhaps, as the Rosetta Stone to a past instantly obscure and distant due to this paradigm shift.

And yet "reading is reading as," and the practice of readers in reading work by Poet X or Y-Female will for the foreseeable future continue to locate the work within the female, and the reader will continue, as he or she has always done, to experience the salient quality of the poet as female first, experimental later. This has not changed in the several years since Sloan first began work on this anthology, when we in San Francisco first began to hear its taking shape from her majestic eyrie up on Bernal Heights. At that time, if I remember correctly, *Moving Borders* was going to gather itself from the august interstices of Donald Allen's 1960 anthology *The New American Poetry 1945-1960,* and was going to begin with Barbara Guest, one of the few woman poets Allen included. The years rolled by, however, years filled with angst and tears, and the book as issued now has been recast, and comes roaring in with a different and earlier focus (Guest now comes second).[2] Beginning the book with Lorine Niedecker is a stroke of bravura typical of Sloan's editorial practice, and recasts the entire book in a different light like a prologue added to a movie at the last minute, forcing her readers to acknowledge North American women writers' debt to Niedecker, who plays here the unsung, ignored, backwoods "I've spent my life on nothing" genius who triumphs only after death—instead of the assured, self-confident, witty, and very much alive Barbara Guest, the way MGM used to give top

billing to Marie Dressler over Norma Shearer. And what a coup to be able to include the "new" (1934) Niedecker poem, "Progression," discovered among the Ezra Pound papers in Austin by Burton Hatlen! Its Eliotic, long-lined cadences reveal a Niedecker heartbreakingly full of promise and assurance, before she got whittled down by the rough treatment of Pound, Zukofsky, and other male mentors:

> [. . .] I should say the social behavior of the individual
> should be thoroughly rained on, and in the same
> rheumatism
> the Introspect's Umbrella Mender waved good-bye. Of
> course,
> I shall meet people here, my antecedents perhaps. But
> how
> shall I know them? If I am fernal, it's fern country, then;
> fern fever has been spread by mono-men I shall pass in the
> air
> of my time and whose main frond cuts I shall have to regret.
> Someone has said: rapid lighted pimperly advanced: I've
> forgotten
> who. A little false for a person in my position:
> gloom-elmed,
> gloam-owned, retreating. (Cuckoo, that juggling of hollow
> nuts) (14)

Of course, beginning this anthology with a poem previously unseen and unknown raises the possibility of all kinds of "buried Caesar" among the buried lives of the past, and in part *Moving Borders* performs any number of necessary resuscitations and rescues of important writers; the book, with its elliptical juxtapositions and deft placement of materials, will encourage us to view many of these in a new light. I wonder indeed if, by including "Nebraska" and "Prairie Houses" among the Guest poems, we are invited to imagine a Barbara Guest under the influence of Niedecker, or at any rate Willa Cather? And then after Guest comes Kathleen Fraser, with a heavy emphasis on the typographically eccentric slash inventive, as though to position Fraser as a leading "visual poet."[3]

(—The book, by the way, arranges its authors in order of first appearance in print, so logically after Niedecker there should have been, mmm, eighty pages or so of blank text, to be filled in the reader's imagination by—whom? This gap, a gap which isn't there a lack minus lack, an *absent lack!*—is suggestive, teasing, denotative of a hole in literary history, a hole or vacuum to which the remainder of the text

comes roaring to stop up, sucked to its surface the way in aircraft disaster films all kinds of unlikely objects come to block up the hole in the plane's skin, the hole made by the first bomb of the terrorists.)

Fraser's move away from the lyric school of Frank O'Hara towards a progressively larger feminist poetics is now a celebrated one, and in her position as founder and co-editor of the poetry newsletter *HOW(Ever)* she encouraged many young writers and invited and inspired reevaluation of many older ones. And so, for example, we can now view a "Barbara Guest under the influence of Kathleen Fraser." Of her model Sloan has written elsewhere[4] "In her poems we find a writer who gives all that she knows to her poems and similarly asks of the poem that it open up all its ways to her. Her life, her teaching, editing, and critical writing are all infused with her gift of friendship and her mission to enhance and strengthen the lives of others. In them we find the same principle of active generosity, always urgent, always serious, and always designed by her deep delight in poetry." There are certainly a *lot* of San Francisco/Bay Area contributors to *Moving Borders!* I count fifteen right off the bat (out of 49—and this includes Canada too), and another seven or eight who lived here among us for an extended period of time, and I wonder—is this due to the nurturing richness of our region, or due to the principles of generosity Sloan so admires in Fraser, or could it be because Sloan must venture off of Bernal Heights to go out into the community and bump into these women at the store sometime? "My location," she says, "is essential and not peripheral to the defining of the terms of this book." (8) For anthologizing is a notoriously tricky business, a delicate negotiation between wildly different realms of the political and the politic, the social and the personal, as well as the competing ideologies of the aesthetic.[5] If an anthology is produced when "such a book is no longer necessary" (3), it also takes the risk of petrifying or fossilizing a movement at the precise moment of enunciating it.

Which movement? One of the marvelous things about *Moving Borders* is the way in which writers of apparently different trajectories are shown here to share a common project, evoking a feminism beyond identity politics. Kathy Acker is shoved up against Susan Howe, Eileen Myles "introduces" Erin Mouré. Patricia Dienstfrey's womb/altar/table meditations from "The Woman without Experiences" show a startling kinship with the veiled shadowy vitrifications of the late Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's "Dictee"—Simone Weil lurking in the background of both?

> Let the one who is diseuse dust
> breathe away the distance of the well. Let the one
> who is diseuse again sit upon the stone nine days

and nine nights. Thus. Making stand again, Eleusis.
—*(from* "Dictee") (318)

Weil, or Maya Deren? And what's up with the strange confluence of Harryette Mullen, Erica Hunt, and Julie Patton—apparently the only African-American writers in the book—appearing one after the other from pages 477 to 498? Was there this moment in 1980 in which the white clouds of the avant-garde suddenly opened up to reveal these three women, only to close up again in 1981? If so, cultural history has a lot to answer to; if not, perhaps this core of black writers—each very different, and dazzling—might form the core of yet another anthology, one that would stretch backwards to Jayne Cortez and move right along to the present-day young generation (e.g. Renee Gladman, Sarah Jones, Giovanni Singleton). Insofar as *Moving Borders* argues for the poetics of inclusiveness, and casts its nets wide indeed to recast all kinds of writers as poets, it's generative enough to make one wish for more, more, more combinations and growth.

What will be new to most US readers, even those dedicated to avant-garde poetry, are the Canadians, for alas, we live in a country which despite NAFTA, etc., doesn't really care very much about what's happening in Canada, and indeed, continually misreads Canadians as American citizens, so that the vast numbers who have made, say, Michael Ondaatje and Margaret Atwood best sellers here apparently think of them as Minnesotans (like Prince, or Mary Tyler Moore). To come across Nicole Brossard early in the book, radiant between Waldrop and Waldman, is to realize anew, or for the first time, what a vivid, strong, and unpredictable writer she is, and with what grace she combines the roles of political priest and *navigateur* of the body and its channels. The Brossard excerpts are well-chosen, winding up with a terrific poem in manuscript, "A High-Priced Rod," wonderfully translated by Cole Swensen. Poetry readers in the US have been both with and without Brossard for years—"without" since English translations and publications of her work appear here only desultorily, and "with" since her aim is true, and the apple doesn't fall far from the tree. Nor have we had enough of Mouré, or Karen MacCormack, or Gail Scott, or Lisa Robertson. They, the Canadians, are smuggled into our attention like the Greeks into Troy: anthology as Trojan horse, a lumbering hollow box filled with weapons and watchful infantry.

The anthology nicely illustrates the gradual slippage between the poem and the novel, as practiced by the North American avant-garde. Sloan includes writers known primarily for their novels (Acker, Scott, Dodie Bellamy) and features excerpts from fictional works written by poets. I suppose Gertrude Stein is the deity presiding over this slippage

(and is hailed by Sloan in her introduction, along with the accomplished fiction writers H.D., Mina Loy, and Laura Riding), though Virginia Woolf, Eileen Chang, Elizabeth Smart, Zora Neale Hurston might also have been cited here. In any case, in an age when Lyn Hejinian publishes *Oxota* and Leslie Scalapino *Defoe* as "novels," and Fanny Howe, Rosmarie Waldrop, Carla Harryman move back and forth with ease between fiction and poetry, the membrane is permeable if not shaky. This erasure of distinction extends to the younger generation as well; are Lisa Jarnot's *Some Other Kind of Mission* and Sianne Ngai's *Discredit* novels? If not, why not? All along the watchtower the boundaries are shifting. As rigid conceptions of plot, character, mise-en-scene, etc. disappear from the aesthetic, and at the same time the realistic novel becomes more and more obviously an extended treatment of two bourgeois subjects (shopping and fucking), art survives and mutates, novel and poem dissolve assume one another's identity, like Liv Ullmann and Bibi Andersson do in Bergman's *Persona,* with similarly disquieting results.[6]

Is there a need for this anthology at this time? Despite the reputed claims that women and men are publishing at roughly equal numbers, I keep seeing issue after issue of journals in which all the contributors are male, or perhaps feature the work of one woman in them (often Sheila E. Murphy). Pressed, the editors will always explain that "women just don't submit." Or, "We *wrote* to Bernadette Mayer and she didn't write back." Shrug. Closing *Moving Borders* I kept thinking of all the grief Mary Margaret Sloan might have saved herself had she accomplished many of her aims by publishing an anthology composed solely of *men's work.* Think of it! Creeley, Baraka, Mac Low, Palmer, Watten, Mackey, Coolidge, McCaffrey, Andrews, Mandel, and on and on until the readers would come to feel, with an uneasy frisson, that they were staring at a black mirror in which vast galaxies of spinning stars were floating in some backwards dimension right beyond their heads.

Will the movement(s) continue? I don't think there's a question of it. The book's terminum of 1990 (all its writers had published by that date) leaves us to consider the comparable anthology of 2015 when, if the unstoppable geometric progression Sloan demonstrates here continues, 200 or 300 writers will be included in *Moving Borders 2,* and we don't know all their names yet by a long shot. Some of them are just now starting to write. Some of them, broken up by the defection of Geri Halliwell from the Spice Girls, and/or the implacable aging of Isaac, Taylor and Zachary Hanson, are moving sightlessly towards the bookshelves and taking down, for the first time, *Moving Borders 1.* Opening it at random. Feeling its heat, its prana.

## NOTES

1 I'll be specific: in the case of *Moving Borders,* the recent deaths of Kathy Acker and Hannah Weiner give off an elegiac, melancholy vibration. These deaths, alluded to briefly and obliquely inside the completed brackets after the contributors' names (-1997]), have an emotional pull that argues with and complicates the narrative's otherwise chronological, linear, forward push and drive. To give another example, few anthologies could achieve the alphabetical rush and sweep of *A Controversy of Poets* (1965), for it begins with the "Europe" of Ashbery and ends with Zukofsky's *"A"-11.* Yet inquiring readers will always wonder what editorial legerdemain went into insuring that no other poets precede Ashbery in the alphabet of Kelly and Leary. The reader of *The New American Poetry* will not have to know the particulars of its backstage dramas—the long holdout of Robert Duncan, for example—to feel the jangly tensions arising from them that run through its length and composition, web and woof.

2 Though perhaps vestiges of the original plan gleam through, pentimento-style, in the preeminence among the "Poetics and Exposition" documents in the back of the book of Marjorie Welish's 1994 salute to Guest.

3 Her contribution to the "Poetics and Exposition" section of the book is on "Visual Poetics, as Projected through Olson's 'Field' into Current Female Writing Practice" (1996) so she emerges as the theoretician of the visual poetry movement as well.

4 In her introduction to the Fraser festschrift, "Mirage #4/Periodical #74" (San Francisco, December 1997).

5 Actually I believe Sloan to be fairly fearless in this regard. I remember urging her to consider for inclusion Helen Adam, Joanne Kyger, Jamie MacInnis, and other woman poets of the Spicer/Duncan circle, and by, finally, excluding them, she might have feared risking my regard, and I'm not even a woman. . .

6 "Move back and forth with ease between fiction and poetry." How about a *Moving Borders* which began with, or followed Niedecker with, Sylvia Plath? I've been to the houses of many of the writers in *Moving Borders,* and like many bookish people, have gravitated to their bookshelves. I don't see *From This Condensery* half as often as I do the big black and gold *Collected Poems of Plath.* Okay, sometimes it's hidden away behind chunky volumes of Lacan's seminars: but it's there, more often than not. What about a reading of *Moving Borders* as in the throes of revulsion (i.e. attraction) to Plath?

—KEVIN KILLIAN

**Review: Alison Bundy, *Dunce Cap* (Burning Deck; Providence, RI, 1998). Paper. 128 pages. $10.00. ISBN 1-886224-23-4 original paperback and ISBN 1-886224-24-2 original paperback, signed. Available from Small Press Distribution, 1341 Seventh St., Berkeley, CA 94710.**

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It's difficult to explain the tenacity of fairy tales and nursery rhymes. They are said to be for children. They lack much of what we generally require of fiction or poetry. Once put into our minds they remain, seemingly forever. Nursery rhymes usually constitute our first experience of poetry. Fairy tales our first experience of narrative. There they are from the beginning and they enter into all our judgements and our perceptions of our readings for the rest of our lives.

Fairy tales are called to mind when reading Alison Bundy's wonderful book *Dunce Cap.* The thirty-one pieces in this tidy book are all without context. They take place somewhere, somehow, but in some unknown place of the imagination. There are no dates and no specific locations. The characters are usually not named. They have roles, functions, presence. The plots of the pieces are not complicated and what supposedly happens is no great mystery. There is no definition of motivation. The pieces often seem unresolved. There is a beginning, a development, but no closure. It is left to the reader to fill out the narrative.

The pieces operate, in short, on a childlike level. The pieces are minimalist narratives that must be trusted by the reader, just as fairy tales are trusted. And like fairy tales Bundy's narratives are antidotes to the oppressive and monstrous fictions of John Updike, Thomas Pynchon, Philip Roth and Ursula Hegi. Instead of closing off the imagination of the reader, Bundy invites the reader into the narrative so that the imagination of the reader is stimulated, enhanced, brought into play as part of the narrative. The reader completes the narrative.

The stories bring to mind words like "mystery," "wonder" and "magic." Those words arise out of the tonelessness of the pieces. The reader is left to wonder what he is to make of the brief narratives. The concreteness of the stories seems to contradict the absence of specific detail. There seems to be a specific setting for each story, but it is not there. The characters seem familiar, but we don't know who they are. Like fairy tales, the tonality is ambiguous. The tone exists somewhere between humor, sorrow and pathos. The pieces seem self-contained but the implications reverberate, resonate, into the kind of responses one feels for the narratives of Kafka or Heinrich Böll. Like the work of

Kafka and Böll, Bundy's stories in their brevity avoid cuteness, sentimentality, melodrama. They make you ask, "What is a narrative?" and "What is a story?" You can see here how the art of reduction can lead to immense resonances.

The longest story in *Dunce Cap* is called "A simple Malady." It begins, "Once there was a doctor who wore gloves and coveted an intangible thing." The doctor arrives in a town where he is to cure the insomnia of a young woman named Fatima. The doctor has been hired by Fatima's father Mr. Impeo. The doctor's cure may or may not work. Fatima is mysteriously changed but, says the doctor, not cured. At the end he leaves to go to meet his double in a cold room in that "other part of the world." The story seems heavy with meaning, but it is impossible to know what it might be. There seems to be a "moral" to the story, but it remains elusive. The story ends without a closure.

In the story "The Inheritance," a story told from a child's point of view, a mysterious, subtly vengeful grandmother works a kind of magic on her grandchildren. The children live with the grandmother, and while she sleeps the children explore the house. When certain possessions of the grandmother disappear, the grandmother begins, presumably, to hide certain pieces of her property. The grandmother, like a wicked witch, takes her vengeance mysteriously and cleverly. The guilt felt by the children is created by the grandmother's cryptic behavior. The inheritance of the grandchildren depends on solving the mysterious behavior of the grandmother.

The narratives in Alison Bundy's *Dunce Cap* turn out to be mainly ironic. The dominant tone of the pieces has to be for the reader a sense of irony that comes from the mixture of concreteness and the absence of what we ordinarily expect from our narratives. We usually have an abundance of detail, so much detail that reading is merely registering the author's unwillingness to leave anything to the reader's imagination. When a writer gives us the material of a narrative without the usual comforts of telling us how to apprehend the narrative, we respond with a sense that we as readers are more knowing than the narrator of the story. Irony is usually created when the reader is more knowledgeable than the narrator. The narrators in Bundy's stories are children, or some innocent person. We mostly do not know who the narrators are, as in fairy tales.

Like fairy tales, Bundy's tales seem vaguely familiar. Have we read them before? Why do we recognize them or elements in them? Are they working on some lower level that we do not recognize or realize? Is there really such a thing as a "collective unconscious?" Is that why we find them mysterious, magical, wonderful?

The cover of Alison Bundy's book shows a hand above a cone. The illustration includes an optical illusion. It is not clear whether the hand is lifting the cone, the dunce cap, off someone's head or whether it's putting it on someone's head. The illustration may be an image of the reader's condition on entering the book or on leaving the book.

Whatever the reader's response may be, *Dunce Cap* is an outstanding piece of work. Buy it and read it again and again. It gets even better on re-reading. It will make you understand why brevity is a virtue. It will make you understand why you don't have to read 800 pages of dull narrative in order to enjoy fiction.

—DALLAS WIEBE

**Jessica Lowenthal, *as if in turning* (Burning Deck, 1996)**
**Heather Ramsdell, *Lost Wax* (University of Illinois Press, 1998)**
**Benjamin Hollander, *The Book of Who Are Was***
**(Sun & Moon, 1997)**

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I had the pleasure of reading Jessica Lowenthal's first book on my patio under a giant eucalyptus where hummingbirds zip in and out among the branches, not unlike these poems that seem to move as phenomena unfolding—emergencies and vanishings like hummingbird's hover and blur. In Lowenthal's work, "as if" *is* turning: the imagination's linchpin between "seem" and "be" enabling investigative correspondence. These poems are also self-reflexive: the linchpin is artifice, "the angle of incidence" is not "the angle / of reflection." But post-Saussurean savvy need not preclude sensual utterance. Unlike lesser poets, Lowenthal hasn't thrown out the melopoeic baby with the bathwater. Sound is intelligence in love with its letters:

Cleaved—

cloven—

lattice shell
latticelike

window shutters folding doors hydraulic gates

Acoustic correspondences intimate (initiate?) imaginative correspondences. Listen to the consonant clusters, the dilating and wincing apertures of vowels: "cleaved," with its forked semantics ("sticking to" / "splitting"), pushing forward to past participle "cloven"(bisulcated? devilish?), a kind of phonetic accretion in which I hear "hoof" splay in "clove hitch, clove hook . . . prairie clover." These cleave.

Genres and definitions are boundaries, but in these poems a "word is not contained by boundary." Biblical and mathematical lexicons, dictionary definitions, the epistle, the sonnet, and the "grotesque" alphabet are used like two-dimensional surfaces against which the poems refract, asking what assumptions, values and ideas are contained within the circumferences of forms. In Lowenthal's rewrite of the opening lines of Genesis, a torqued phoneme turns "the word made flesh" inside out: "In the beginning was the bird and the bird was with god and / the bird was god. He was in the beginning *with* god. All / things were made through him . . ." Things precede their names: bird begets word.

These poems demonstrate that while wisdom may be the ability to name things correctly, the responsibility of the poet is to question the received wisdom of received names. Here are purposeful misfirings of language, the *"beloved* accidents" to which we are betrothed, for better or worse, in the letter's law. And what are these accidents but generative–permissions granted by a love of, and attentiveness to, language. In Lowenthal's poetry each word is a profile that, in turning, opens outward onto imaginative planes and provocative correspondences.

*

For the past several years I've been drawn to Heather Ramsdell's poetry without being able to articulate why in any satisfying way: the poems seem to wriggle out from under critical apparatuses and flout the plodding gumshoe of close-reading. But when *Lost Wax* was selected as a winner of the National Poetry Series, I thought that reading a long run of her work would allow me to understand what it is that both intrigues and escapes me.

It is, perhaps, the escaping that intrigues. In a Ramsdell poem, the floorboards of voice, tone, and situation are constantly shifting. The opening lines of "Flag in the Gate":

> Where a way, a gate to open
> On to a gate, agape
> Say not anything, something

Human, puff
*Of gore flung out to trick the mob*

Here come that ol' Bakhtinian heteroglossia—multiple, contending voices looking for "a way, a gate to open." But the way is several, and the flag of language—"blurring out and snapping in"—gestures toward a country none of us has seen. These quicksilver shifts in tone, diction, and situation undermine any traditional attempt at discerning narrative. At best, there are oblique or contiguous relations: the gate "agape" like a mouth saying "not anything, something human"? And the "gore flung out": speech? What makes a traditional (i.e., linear) reading of these poems difficult is that they resist the symbolic and conceptual cohesions of metaphor. In fact, there are few metaphors in Ramsdell's work. Instead, these poems are steeled by metonymy (specifically synecdoche, or part-whole relationships). While both metonymy and metaphor are figures of displacement, metonymy generally gravitates toward *material* relationships (object-to-object, voice-to-voice, etc.), while metaphor generally gravitates toward *abstract* relationships (object-to-concept, object-to-symbol, etc.). Ironically, metonymy's object-based relationships tend to disrupt narrative more than metaphor's object-to-concept/symbol relationships, which strikes me as one reason why many experimental poems such as these come off as "reader unfriendly": there is a friend, albeit abstract, in metaphor's conceptual and symbolic relations. And a survey of experimental poetry since, say, 1900 would undoubtedly turn up more examples of metonymy and synecdoche than metaphor. Of course, metonymy's disjunctions create new correspondences, and in Ramsdell's work these fragments examine the oblique relations that exist *between* voices, *between* objects, *between* sequences of events: the lost wax of phenomena.

Like many poets whose work gravitates toward metonymy, Ramsdell's poetry is strongest in the serial mode, as in the "Closet" sequence and *Bridge Segment.* If a poem is epistemological bridgework, these serial pieces eschew metaphor's magnifico. Indeed, *Bridge Segment* questions the very figure of bridging:

> There won't be the closure of books and hands
> laid on the table. There was no speeding drum,
> not a flag, not a map. It has no legend, and its keys,
> I assume, are in the river. There is no bottom.
> There is no perimeter, there is nothing if not surface
> baldness and its continuous arrangement
>
> which is, exactly, the field.

A response to Crane's *Bridge* from the far other shore of the century? While Ramsdell's work shows little if any Black Mountain influence, there are echoes, here, of Olson's admonition that "a field / is not a choice, is / as dangerous as a prayer, as a death, as any / misleading."

*

There's the cynic's truism that only the convinced show up at a protest. Then there's the recent mass protests in Indonesia where nearly a whole country was convinced, and Suharto stepped down. Watching Indonesia through the TV screen, I wondered what sort of political change poetry affects. Is poetry protest? If so, whom does it convince? Who will show up?

Old hat: I sit in on an MFA lecture on Oppen. Readings from *Discrete Series* stupefy and silence. The work is difficult, and no one's convinced. Polemics about the poet's responsibility to the reader, and vice versa, abound, and this is no place to enter into the fray. But the questions are important: if poetry is protest, who reads the poems that ask difficult questions of themselves and their audience? who will show up? Poetry is difficult because the world is difficult. For some, the difficulties aren't worth the effort. Likewise, some stayed home during the protests in Indonesia: content with the status quo, fearful of mob rule, apathetic.

I read Benjamin Hollander's *The Book of Who Are Was* as a poetry of protest against the disappearances and displacements that are both inherent to language and willfully orchestrated through its political manipulation. Like any protest, the work is difficult. These poems ask that the reader be familiar to some degree with Dickinson, Celan, and Jabès, as well as Wittgenstein, Derrida, and Lyotard. Who will show up to read the book? There is no moral imperative to read x or y, and I want to say that there shouldn't be. At the same time, language is power, and in this century we have seen the abuses of that power on an unprecedented scale. There is a pipeline running between the word and the world, the name and the judgment. Not convinced? Listen:

> Never say: "corpse"
> Never say: "victim"
>
> Say too: *figuren*
> rags and wood
>
> ragland woodland
> puppet block of human

Never say: "human"
Puppet block

1942: in order to destroy evidence of mass extermination, the Third Reich changes its corpse disposal policy. The dead are dug up from mass graves and incinerated: no more corpses. Ashes. Concentration camp Jews forced to dig up the bodies are told by German soldiers to call the bodies "figuren" (German for "puppet," "marionette"). Those who disobey are shot. As Hollander's work reminds us, language not only preserves and memorializes humanity: it can conceal and destroy it. Say rags and wood. This is Zeus in swan's clothing, but the stakes are higher. What is at stake in naming correctly is more than academic squabbling and personal aesthetics: our perception of reality is at stake. And so, poetry is "a gift, what must be said" and "what sticks in our throats," a "crossing over" and a "house of hiding / house of signs."

In the Cabalist tradition, the letter *is* life. Late in the twentieth century, in the wake of the Third Reich's *figuren* and the Rwandan "genocide fax" lost in the bureaucratic shuffle, the letter is also death. Thus, Hollander's poetry sets the "living" letters of the *Zohar,* marching "like troops behind their kings," against Celan's "human resounding Marchroar." This is the book of splendor and this is the book of darkness. The letter giveth and taketh away.

Hollander is exceptionally adept at building a kind of meditative combustion in his poems by sounding off of fragments from a variety of sources. Note, for example, the recoveries and redispersals of Dickinson sewn into "A Packet For 'D'," and the deflections and recirculations of phrases in the fictive Celan interview ("Commentary of the False Numbers–3,4"). But the most powerful work is in the penultimate section of the collection, *Ohne Aba: Sabra,* which to my mind is one of the most powerful meditations on the Holocaust in the English language this side of Rothenberg's *Khurbn.*

It's too bad that Hollander didn't provide notes for the many sources that fold into *The Book of Who Are Was.* For example, a reader with some familiarity of poetry will probably recognize that "D" is for Dickinson in "A Packet For 'D'." But the subtle correspondences between Hollander's and Dickinson's poetry are enhanced by shuttling between source and site. Then again, we all disappear through the language-cipher, never knowing the sources of anything, never knowing "who the book of who are was / was for."

—DAN FEATHERSTON

***Paul Metcalf, Collected Works,* Volume One (1956-1976), Volume Two (1976-1986), and Volume Three (1987-1997). Coffee House Press, Minneapolis, MN, 1997.**

Sperm whales are among the longest and deepest divers of all cetaceans, possibly being exceeded only by the bottlenose whale. The limits of duration and depth of the dive are determined largely by the size of the individual. Sperm whales sound by lifting the forward part of the body a few feet into the air, giving a strong spout, rounding the back in a high arch, and descending steeply. The whales appear to dive vertically and can descend to depths as great as some 1,500 meters. Top estimates of lengths of dives are 80 minutes. The first blow after a sperm whale rises is an explosive blast that may be heard for nearly 250 meters. The spout is moist and fetid and has a burning effect on the human skin.

"My own approaches to history are very similar, another kind of dive into the soul," remarks Metcalf in his essay "Where Do You Put The Horse?" in Volume Three of his *Collected Works.*

> I would think of history—and the varieties of language that ride with it—as a vast resource, into which one plunges with energy, comparable to sexual energy, demanding and focusing all one's vitalities. Following this, there is the second phase, which I learned absolutely from the poet Charles Olson: History is important only insofar as it impinges on the present. First, the plunge, the descent into hell, the near-drowning if you wish; then the return to the surface. Because, if you drown, who cares? And if you don't plunge, who cares?

Paul Metcalf is a familiar name to many, Herman Melville's great grandson, a writer's writer working the outer reaches of the literary world, publishing only in limited editions put together "by small idealistic presses."

Metcalf's *Collected Works,* Volumes One through Three, cover a period of writing from 1956 to 1997. Volume Three includes two new works, *Huascarán,* a poetic tribute to the Indians of Peru, and *The Wonderful White Whale of Kansas,* a comparison of Moby Dick with The Wizard of Oz, heretofore unpublished. Also included in these volumes are *Will West, Genoa, Patagoni, The Middle Passage, Apalache, I-57, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, The Island, Waters of Potowmack, Golden Delicious, Firebird, Both, Zip Ode, Mountaineers Are Always*

*Free! ". . .and nobody objected," Araminta and the Coyotes, Louie's Torch* and *Willie's Throw.* Volume Three includes three plays and *Where Do You Put The Horse?,* a collection of essays.

The omission of Metcalf's works from periodicals is discouraging. Perhaps this has been a matter of free choice. But it would be far more inspiriting to see a generous acceptance of Metcalf's idiosyncratic writing included among the academic reviews and literary journals. Writing is still—a mere year and a half from the next century—largely dictated by sclerotic, Victorian ideas of categorization. Nonfiction is pragmatic, factual, and "unimaginative." Poetry is the purview of weirdos, ne'er-do-wells, and bluestockings, a freeform free-for-all. Fiction must have a beginning, middle, and end. There must be foreshadowing and character development. There must be tension, conflict, and suspense. Is life actually like this? Does anyone's day actually occur in these patterns? I think not. "It is strange that, at all visible levels, American literature is so neatly organized into exclusive territories," writes Metcalf in "The Categories," the first of eighteen essays comprising *Where Do You Put The Horse?*

> In practice, there are two warring tyrannies at work here: fiction writers make money. . .poets have class, or status, or altitude. As a fiction writer, I have a trade, a profession, I sell my wares, just about as fast as I can manufacture them . . .as a poet, I may have a job (poet-in-residence), but I'm above the marketplace, my gems are beyond price, and I look more than a little down on you.
>
> Perhaps this is what I'm after: that the reach in our literature, our tradition (and we have an example of this in as recent a writer as Carl Sauer), originates in prose, a dirt-prose, that in the power and energy of its own passion forces the gates of poetry. No wooden horse, no gimmicks—just sheer force.
>
> In the face of this tradition—which, to me, has the force of an avalanche—it seems strange to see our official, functional world falling back into the little inherited European boxes that so antedate what is happening today and what has been happening for so many years.

Metcalf's themes are eminently familiar and gruesomely vivid: murder, war, migration, discovery, disease, insanity, sabotage, slavery, torture. The seasonal flight of swans, the reckless slaughter of buffalo

on the American plains, the exquisite horror of cannabilism, volcanic eruption, monstrosities, wonders, cataclysms, black distortions, enormous furies of vermilion. "Nearly the whole gamut of human passion." His particular focus is North and South America, its geology and inhabitants, the settling of the "New World." ". . .hills green to their tops, and the valleys rich with vegetation, wild wheat, clover and oats," "old men young men one legged men and some that don't happen to be men," "good homemade soups and breads, guys in beards, gals in peasant skirts and jeans," "New England Druids," "Tennessee Phoenicians," "crescentic gouges and chattermarks, bedrock knobs with rockdrifts streaming from the lee. . .the rock brecciated, slikensided, crushed, and shattered."

Metcalf's method of construction is that of a bricoleur. He chooses a topic and then saturates it with texts gathered from other sources, collapsing distinctions between interior and exterior, past and present, recorded history and the actuality of raw experience. The words *conscience* and *consciousness* are close in sound, writes Metcalf, "and in my sense of history. . .the barrier between these words is shattered and they become one."

> I can enter an ethos, a precise local quality, that may include the people, the past, the landscape, the geography, the geology, the climate, the natural ecology, the innumerable human and manmade changes, with the dynamics of each—so that I see it, feel it, think it, sense it, today, as a totality of *was/is*. And I think the success of the writing, insofar as there is success, is the result of this permeation. [Metcalf's italics]

"My effort in all the books," Metcalf reiterates in "The Making Of A Play," has been to collapse time, to create a plane on which events of all periods may occur at once, to create tensions that one finds in the static arts, that I found so forceful, for example, in the color associations of Josef Albers—the chemistry of a red against a green, etc."

One begins to feel very acutely, after reading Metcalf for a time, the immediacy of history in the random assortment of things combining to make a gestalt, a life, around and under and *in* one's body. The air one breathes, one's clothes, the walls, windows, carpet, ink, paper, pen, computer, plumbing, wiring, language, emotions, birds, cars, sudden hum of the Frig coming on, the food inside, the abrasions and pleasures awaiting one on the other side of the door, everything conflates into one dynamic ongoing collage.

"In our multiethnic, multicultural, severely disjointed world," Metcalf elaborates further in his essay "The Creative Process" (Volume Three), *"bricolage* may be our most natural mode." He quotes from an unpublished essay by David Kadlec on the theory of *bricolage* as developed by Claude Lévi-Strauss:

> *Bricolage* is distinguished from the work of the craftsman insofar as the materials used are those salvaged from the wreckage of previous constructions rather than materials designed specifically for the task at hand. Lévi-Strauss views mythical thought, which draws from an extensive but limited repertoire, as a kind of intellectual *bricolage.* New myths can be wrought exclusively from the fragments of old ones.

Seminal models for this type of literary construction are Ezra Pound's *Cantos,* William Carlos William's *Paterson* and much of Charles Olson's *Maximus Poems.* Metcalf provides a bibliography at the end of each of his pieces, citing the sources of his text-collage. He avoids the use of footnotes purely for aesthetic reasons ("I was, and am, averse to attaching little burrs at the bottom of each page, referring to notes at the back; this would have broken the flow, the rhythms"). His sources are extremely diverse, including textbooks, encyclopedias, guidebooks, diaries, memoirs, tales, articles, accounts, natural histories, biographies, travel narratives and newspapers. Reviewing Metcalf is like reviewing over a hundred different people, including George Washington (a bad speller) Herman Melville, L. Frank Baum, Walt Whitman, Gertrude Stein, Robert E. Lee, Abraham Lincoln, John Brown, John Wilkes Booth, Booker T. Washington, Mao Tse-Tung, Mary H. Jones and Thomas Jefferson. It's as though Metcalf descended into some historical underworld with a tape recorder and returned with a swarm of voices. His own writing tends to be direct, plain, and self-effacing, somewhat like a piece of beautifully designed Danish furniture, a table or chair with simple functional lines that emphasize the quality of the wood rather than draw attention to the intricacy and skill of their construction. Metcalf's authorial presence is nearly invisible. He deposits his verbal *objets trouvés* and leaves the room. The relations that the reader might establish between the aggregates of material depend upon his or her willingness to draw inferences. Sven Berkerts faults Metcalf's play between interior and exterior in *U.S. Dept. of the Interior* as too baldly incongruous to be affecting, and although he admits the "vision coheres impressively otherwise," "it

leads us to think that even this most inclusive of modes, the assemblage, is subject to strictures and limitations. Not everything can necssarily be incorporated within the matrix of juxtapositions." I feel this is a fair criticism. But a compromise would've been devitalizing. The deep saturation Metcalf brings to that most solipsistic state of all at the beginning of *I-57*—schizophrenia—layering on extracts from twenty-two different sources *(American Journal of Insanity, Out of the Depths, Mania, The Inner World of Mental Illness,* etc.) reifies the pathology of that devastating illness in a language so uncannily vivid it feels alive, brought to the surface of the page with seething force, an effect that would've been lost had Metcalf inserted his own commentary. The further conflation of human skin with "the skin of the earth" a few pages later—"photo receptors in the cells of the whorls of the fingertips," "the skin of the land, undulatory, slightly billowy," deepens the sense of tactile actuality.

It takes a great heart and a great skill to unearth buried similitudes without diminishing their intrinsic wonder with a reductive pedantry. But since these works elude categorization, how are they to be evaluated? Is their intent to persuade, to inform, or to entertain? Are they more like poems, or more like essays? (All three volumes of Metcalf's *Collected Works* are shelved in the essay sections at University Bookstore and Elliott Bay Bookstore respectively here in Seattle). "Not a poem, not a novel, not a history, not a journal, yet at times some or all of these," writes Metcalf in the introduction to *I-57* in Volume Two, *"I-57* is an idiosyncratic approach to a place, a region, and to an interior and exterior life. . ." The key word is 'approach,' a way into, a path. A region is generally approachable without much difficulty; but the actualization of "an interior and exterior life" promises a more intriguing experience. It is to the extent Metcalf realizes this convergence that his focus as a writer demonstrates real clarity.

*"Genoa* is the last book I wrote which may be described as a novel," Metcalf remarks in his essay "Totem Paul: A Self-Review." Guy Davenport calls it an architectonic novel. Since then, with the fiction dropped out, I think all of my books, individually and collectively, may be called 'narrative hieroglyphs.'"

> It has to do with size, and how you value it, said Olson.
>
> You can approach BIG America and spread yourself like a pancake, sing her stretch as Whitman did, be puffed up as we are over PRODUCTION. It's easy. THE AMERICAN WAY. Soft.

> Or recognize that our power is simply QUANTITY. Without considering purpose. Easy too. That is, so long as we continute to be INGENIOUS about machines, and have the resources.
>
> Or you can take an attitude, the creative vantage. See her as OBJECT in MOTION, something to be shaped, for use. It involves a first act of physics.

Magnitude is a determinant of form. Space shapes the things around us. The large organism must compensate for its preponderance of volume by selectively increasing its critical surfaces. The general method of increasing surface area is to introduce complications: to flatten, grow hairs, branch, wrinkle, elongate, and hollow out. Form roots and branches, bubbles and berries. Thorns, cilia, fur, antennae. Vertebrae and ribs. Eddies and whirligigs.

Pound called it a VORTEX. The characterizing energies of some place, some civilization. ". . .a radiant node or cluster. . .from which, and through which, and into which, ideas are constantly rushing." "A patterned integrity accessible to the mind," explains Hugh Kenner, "topologically stable; subject to variations of intensity; brought into the domain of the senses by a particular interaction of words."

> Imagine, next, the metabolic flow that passes through a man and is not the man: some hundred tons of solids, liquids and gases serving to render a single man corporeal during the seventy years he persisits, a patterned integrity, a knot through which pass the swift strands of simultaneous ecological cycles, recycling transformations of solar energy. At any given moment the knotted materials weigh perhaps 160 pounds. (And "Things," wrote Ernest Fenollosa about 1904, are "cross-sections cut through actions, snapshots.")

There is a sense of largeness to Metcalf's works, a cetaceous amplitude, though this bigness of scale is different in tone and tenor from the frequently autocratic *Cantos,* aggressive volubility of the *Maximus Poems,* or thunderously dissonant *Paterson.* Works such as *Genoa,* with its quilt-like interweaving of text from Melville's *Moby Dick,* Columbus' journals and Metcalf's own narrative interspersion has—in many ways—much in common with certain French work, such as Michel Butor's *Mobile, "Étude Pour Une Représentation Des États-Unis,* inspired by the display of quilts at Vermont's Shelburne Museum,

or Claude Simon's *Les Corps conducteurs,* another patchwork of verbal *objets trouvés.* "While it is true," Brian McHale remarks in *Postmodernist Fiction,* "as contemporary critical theory has taught us, that *every* text is in fact an intertextual space where the materials of other texts are brought into a new relation, this intertextuality is particularly heightened and foregrounded in the *nouveau nouveau roman.*

The parallels running through *Genoa* (hydrocephaly, monomania, Moby Dick and Melville, Melville and Columbus, the Carribean islands and urate crystals in Columbus' toes) underscore an important difference between Metcalf's "experimental" writing and other postmodernist authors. There is little trace of that Saussurean syzygy, that arbitrary sizzle between signified and signifier that has resulted in so much deconstruction and loosening of the referential register. Metcalf's language bulks weightily with referential mass. Language and experience interact. The world teems with resemblances. "Not the smallest atom stirs or lives on matter," observed Captain Ahab, "but has its cunning duplicate in mind." Metcalf is ruggedly empirical; analogy and metaphor are reached by a procedure comparable to building a house. The discreteness of parts emphasizes the complexity of the materials, the intricacies of the external world.

> An exposed joint can add highlight and shadow or pattern to a form. It can help the viewer understand the architecture of the piece by revealing the relationship of intersecting parts. Exposed joinery also offers an opportunity to add rich detail, which can be a source of delight as people touch and use the object.
>
> —*Making Joints,* by Ian J. Kirby with John Kelsey

Metcalf's arrangement of texts has a funny way of allowing events to exist *in situ*—right here, right now—with an unnerving clarity. The effect is sometimes deeply disturbing. There is an account of a Japanese POW camp in *Genoa* so horrific and vivid I couldn't go back to the book for a week.

The collection of essays at the beginning of Volume Three are helpful toward understanding Metcalf's writing, are written in a plain, unaffected style, and are amiable without being garrulous; altogether an enjoyable read, although I disagree with much of what he says. He is critical of contemporary American poetry, particularly language poetry (he offers a sampling of John Ashbery, who, he says, "has chosen a kind of hermetic narcissim") decrying its reluctance to engage reality. "I would suggest that the majority of poets writing and publishing

today have, at some early, elemental point, suffered a failure of courage." "Your poet is often a frightened soul," he later goes on to say, "and this fear seems to express itself as, first, self-indulgence, and second, a terrifying dedication to poetry. These poets have, in fact, placed the cart perfectly in advance of the horse: poetry trying to pull life." I would counter these charges with any number of arguments—one of the more salient being that a prime influence on language poetry was Marcel Duchamp, whose attitude was one of incorporating life and art in a manner not unlike the Cheyenne Contraries of the Great Plains, or the Fool in King Lear, mocking entrenched ideas with the very idea of revealing life in all its ugliness and wonder—but I come to review Paul Metcalf, not harpoon him. (And why not put a cart in front of a horse: drop a turbocharged eight piston quatrain in that cart, and you can take that horse anywhere you want).

Metcalf impugns contemporary poets as being infatuated with nouns. "Many of them have forsaken the traditional artist's role of making and are satisfying themselves with simply naming; they have, in short, substituted nouns for verbs." I found this ironic because it is evident throughout Metcalf's work (as well as Pound and Olson) that this is a guy who *loves* naming things, who *loves* substantive nouns. Cataloguing, listing, stacking things on a big pallet of prose as though he were wheeling around in a warehouse of the imagination in a forklift. Take, for instance, the way he focuses attention on the intrinsically lyrical qualities in the directions for building a Ford crank box, a verbal *objet trouvé* installed in *Sialia,* Volume One:

> Drill six more trunnion rivet holes.
> Hand-rivet six rivets in trunnion.
> Close in the two overflow-plug bushes, to be tapped to
> take
> the overflow screws. These screws are at different
> levels,
> to show maximum and minimum oil plash-pool depths
> in crank-box fly-wheel housing depression.
> Press-rivet six rivets in end trunnion shell.
> Turn crank-box shell projections down over trunnion
> shell,
> with hand-hammer.
> Braze trunnion shell to crank-box shell, four-hole, hand-
> revolved brazing furnace.
> On a large cast-iron jig, with legs and clamp and spotting
> pins, gauge and straighten the trunnion.

Drill the trunnion hole.
With angle plate on face-plate and lathe and back rest fixture, turn trunnion.

And to hook on here is a lifetime of assiduity, proclaimed Olson. "Best thing to do is *to dig one thing or place or man* until you yourself know more abt that than is possible to any other man. It doesn't matter whether it's Barbed Wire or Pemmican or Paterson or Iowa. But *exhaust* it. Saturate it. Beat it." Who can argue with that?

—JOHN OLSON

**Christine de Lailhacar, *The Mestizo as Crucible: Andean Indian and African Poets of Mixed Origin as Possibility of Comparative Poetics.* Studies in Modern Poetry, 5. New York: Peter Lang, 1996; x + 318 pp.**

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That writing which is most emotionally compelling maintains, with greater or lesser explicitness, an intimate metaphorical relation to the major themes that haunt their author's existence. Preoccupied with her "bric-a-brac" identity, which lumps together fragments of France, Germany, and the Americas, and bits of other places as well, Christine de Lailhacar has read the texts of the "Great Composites" (particularly those by Cecilia Vicuña, Edouard Maunick, Henri Lopès, César Davila Andrade, and José Maria Arguedas), found in them an echo of her own identity preoccupations, has read herself in their playful suffering and their variegated words, and invokes their authority in order to proclaim herself a *mestiza.* And now, in her recent work, *The Mestizo as Crucible,* she decides to pay them homage (in the Derridean sense). With interest.

Christine de Lailhacar takes certain risks by walking the tightrope she has strung from the Andean Cordillera to the Himalayas by way of Mt. Kilamanjaro. From the ground, it would be easy to make a fuss over the literary bazaar she passes through, attacking the eclecticism of her

tastes and the impressionistic quality of her proceedings, except that she succeeds in extracting a method—better, a choreography—from all this.

It is the poets whom she visits first, privileging the empathy, the intuitive thrust, the elective affinity she maintains with "vibration and water"—the forces of the sacred that animate their speech. The first in line are two literary figures near to her heart: Cecilia Vicuña, weaver and poet, "Hispano-Andean mestiza" (viii), and the Mauritian poet Edouard Maunick, as much African as Hindu (according to Lailhacar) and comparable to André Breton in his quest for a higher vision and a surreal experience of language. There follows the shadow of Henri Lopès, a kind of Hermes who enabled the meeting of Lailhacar and Maunick to occur, then one with whom the author is less familiar, Derek Walcott, whose masterpiece *Omeros* is briefly evoked in the form of an open-ended conclusion. Also in the mix are two deceased writers (one Ecuadorean Indian, the other Hispano-Peruvian), both "victims of the tension caused by the problematic identity of the *mestizo*" (viii): César Davila Andrade, author of a long poem in Spanish, translated into Quechua, on the Indian condition, *Boletin y elegia de las mitas,* and the novelist José Maria Arguedas, whose childhood language was, improbably, Quechua, and whose finest work is *Los ríos profundos.*

The body of work involved is sufficient indication that Lailhacar is not seeking to define the contours and contents of a "mestizo literature." *The Mestizo as Crucible* represents less a theoretical work than a series of exegetical touches and frictions—Lailhacar speaks of "anscultation"—practiced on the very substance of the texts. Initially, this entails a literal exegesis aiming at clarifying the meaning of words, syntactical constructions, references and allusions. This undertaking, which also involves oral texts created in languages unknown to the author, is ambitious, to say the least. It would almost be possible to speak of a meta-exegesis, since she is working from translations, as with the Bamana poems "Karaw Ka," translated by the anthropologist Dominique Zaban.

The author also devotes herself to an allegorical exegesis, seeking to link meanings transversally among the different texts of her *corpus,* beyond the autonomous meanings of each. Here, the metaphor that seems most apt in describing her approach is that of the "khipu," described as follows in the useful glossary accompanying the main body of the text: ***Khipu/quipu*** (Quechua), "string of wool or fiber used as notation system. A central string has several knots; meaning lies in the spacing between the knots. From each knot, other strings may 'radiate' new meaning in all directions. The ***khipu*** literally represents

the Andean mode of 'radial' thinking, as opposed to alphabetical, linear (causal) thinking" (308).

Through a friction preformed on the texts of her *corpus*—recalling Césaire's line in *Ferrements:* "To try words? Rubbing them to conjure up the unformed"—Lailhacar wishes to lay bare a sort of archi-text common to Andean and African poets and written in Greek, "the Western archi-language" (6). Since Greek functions by means of associative chains of words-words/words-concepts, it could, according to the author, account for the universal workings of the human mind. Clearly, there's a lot of Frobenius in there. This German Africanist was cherished in Negritude circles for having been the first to risk declaring something that had previously been considered an oxymoron: "African civilization." In search of an African classicism, he found in the statuary of Ife and Benin the aesthetic equivalent of the statues of Greek antiquity, and to his mind, this was the sole authentic African art. Although, like him, Lailhacar is fascinated by a kind of pre-colonial Golden Age of the word and aesthetics of the Other, she sees on the contrary a kind of higher authenticity in hybridity, *mestizaje,* which she defines as the superimposition of a written text on an oral text belonging to a common non-Western cultural stock, always legible beneath the most recent inscription. Moreover, she adds: "if every there was *mestizaje,* it can be found in the Greek Language" (136), indicating also that in its textual as well as behavioral forms, *mestizaje* would indeed be the true standard of authenticity. Thus, in Chapter VI, devoted to Edouard Maunick, she observes that "For all his 'négritude de préférence,' Maunick would not be the authentic poet I believe him to be, if he had not been obliged—and he loved that obligation—to don the mask of westernness, the perfectly tailored suit of the diplomat" (193).

It is regrettable that reading Derida did not further corrode the mode of thought around which *The Mestizo as Crucible* is organized, and which, despite the author's intentions, remains binary: a higher degree of authenticity and the quest for essences remain equal and paradoxical components of the author's priorities. *The Mestizo. . .,* which is otherwise teeming with pathways, erudition, and wit, could thereby have gained in structure and nuance, particularly as regards the evaluation of two African writers, Chinua Achebe and Ngugi wa Thiong'o, both unjustly charged with being (in substance) Afrocentrists.

On the other hand, the wealth of this study's reflexion on Cratylism and the literature of the margins may be readily appreciated. In writing it, Lailhacar has, through a kind of osmosis, put into practice what Marie-Christine Rochmann *(Edouard J. Maunick: Hommage* [Paris: L'Harmattan, 1992], 171) sees as the specific trait of Maunickian

Cratylism—namely, the poet's attempt to find himself in and through words, in order to reverse the process of trans-substantiation through which his body has been broken up into signs on the page. "How can one reach others if one hasn't reached oneself?" he asks. With all due respect to Pascal, Christine de Lailhacar's project of depicting herself is in no way foolish.

—SYLVIE KANDÉ
[Tr. from the French
by Christopher Winks]

## CONVOCATION + METONYMY

• Audre Lorde, *The Collected Poems of Audre Lorde* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1997), 489 pp.

Educator, political essayist, civil rights advocate, novelist, and poet Audre Lorde (1934-1992) left us a body of work that, with the publication of this 500-page volume, demands to be read as a significant contribution to the diverse culture of opposition forged by a wide range of writers and artists in New York City at the onset of the 1970s—when social promise and artistic production conspired jointly at times across aesthetic boundaries.

Contemporary with poets as dissimilar as Diane DiPrima, Amiri Baraka, Ted Berrigan or Adrienne Rich, Audre Lorde wrote anthems about rising from the figurative or real poverties of everyday life; about self-determination, and the continuity of kinship; about the various rites of passage from daughterhood to maternity—as if in perfect keeping with other transits. . . of night into day, or of one season into another. She wrote also, to be more specific, about what it meant to be a black woman in the United States: in a speech devoid of apology or ingratiating gesture, a language that glimmers with complex image-making and argument:

I
Is the total black, being spoken
From the earth's inside.
There are many kinds of open.
How the diamond comes into a knot of flame
How a sound comes into a word, coloured
By who pays what for speaking.

("Coal")

In her most accomplished work (much of it from the books *New York Head Shop and Museum,* 1970; *Between Our Selves,* 1976; and *Our Dead Behind Us,* 1986) Lorde mastered a kind of poem that took seemingly flat statement and wrought it bluntly into unexpected curves of phrasing and conclusion. A poem of 1976 unfolds as a response to news reports following the brutal murder in Queens of an African-American child at the hands of a police officer later acquitted by a jury of eleven white men and one black woman. It begins:

The difference between poetry and rhetoric
is being ready to kill
yourself
instead of your children.

I am trapped on a desert of raw gunshot wounds
and a dead child dragging his shattered black
face off the edge of my sleep. . .

("Power")

Likewise, in "New York City 1970," sentence is passed over a rotting urban "death by accretion and slow ritual," the ambivalence of a self raging against its untenable position within the "new steel" grid of criminality, nightmare or indifference. So, too, in a poem written in a mode of political naming marked by its historical moment:

. . . .the dark mangled children
came streaming out of the atlas
Hanoi Angola Guinea-Bissau Mozambique Pnam-Phen
merged into Bedford-Stuyvesant and Hazelhurst
Mississippi
haunting my New York tenement that terribly bright
summer
while Detroit and Watts and San Francisco were burning
. . .

("Equinox")

Lorde also wrote beautiful woman-to-woman love lyrics wherein eros and social urgency perform a union parallel to the pleasure of bodies touching:

> And I would be the moon
> spoken over your beckoning flesh
> breaking against reservations
> beaching thought
> my hands at your high tide
> over and under inside you
> and the passing of hungers
> attended, forgotten.
>
> ("On a night of the full moon")

These examples, and a series of jarring poems written in the thick of her final struggle with cancer ("Vigil," "On the Edge," "Naming the Stories," "Diaspora," and "Reins"), stand out within a poetic corpus that often shied at the level of formal invention. But these poems prove how Lorde's aesthetics of self, identity and convocation, at its best, managed to complicate the matter of its inquiry by remarking the shadow and edge from which symptoms of the social are genuinely belied.

• Peter Gizzi, *Artificial Heart* (Providence, Rhode Island: Burning Deck, 1998), 93 pp.

Of the writerly confluence that came into its own for the first time around the journal *O.blek*—culminating in the conference and posterior two-part publication of *Writing from the New Coast*—few poets display the prismatic formal versatility of that magazine's co-editor and generational co-conspirator. Peter Gizzi has been an important force in the gathering of poets now in their early to late thirties, many of whom have sought to use what was most valuable to them from the dismantling performed by a previous generation. The sheer range of available possibilities—and in keeping with the situation now in many of the other arts—has led to a pluralism in this wake of a prior heroic moment. Armed with a learned sophistication in what regards the referential, lyric address has since encompassed the grammars of a new cultural paradigm and reinstated the supremacy of poetic pleasures and their ultimate responsibility.

More so than in his previous books *(Music for Films, Periplum and Hours of the Book),* in *Artificial Heart* Gizzi employs the opulence of speech conjunction and cultural sampling to fine effect. The first and

strongest section is entitled "New Picnic Time"—Pere Ubu's outstanding third album of 1980, the title evoking for Gizzi "the punk exuberance of Manet's 'Luncheon on the Grass.'" Not only does this provide Gizzi the opportunity to lift from the seemingly non-sequitur shrieks of band leader and songwriter David Thomas, but to create his own narrative soundscape wherein the desire for alternate angular worlds lies behind and beyond the "decomposing image:"

> When will they say hear me. It was a dream. It was a tin can.
> It was a funny thing to feel. And the children. Or beyond
> this for posture, a simple garden, evergreen, a green car
> out front,
> the picket fence is white, what color are the flowers
> unwritten in a day. There is no space. Only sky and water.
>
> Uncanny earth. A funny thing to feel.

The reference and riff encompassed by Gizzi ranges from Andrew Marvell to Spicer's Lorca, or from Charles Ives to David Byrne. Likewise, each poem seeks a certain autonomy of form and statement, and the eclectic voice that emerges goes from Creeley-patterned lyric implosion to contemporary British inflection in the work of writers as different as J. H. Prynne and Christopher Middleton. Listen to Gizzi's precision of language:

> The lapping waters
> at the edge there—replete with rim effect—
> astronauts witness leaving the atmosphere,
> or seen from a glass of tap water topped off
> on a sweltering day in June.
> [. . .]
> An instant in the life of an evolving mosaic
> is the shape of space between our talk.

Gizzi has no doubt mastered discursive scope and elegance. There are moments for me, however, in which a certain playfulness of speech runs the risk of arch display ("Ledger Domain")—if rendered elsewhere with success, for example, as in the poem "Lonely Tylenol." His lyric weaving of contemporary critical debate enacts a creative confusion between the celebration or disapproval of the vocabulary we've inherited:

> An emblem of attention

between image and absence
it's the "all clear"

at the end of the Gift.

At its most successful, Gizzi's *Artificial Heart* reveals a lush awareness as per the beautiful and unbeautiful constructed natures of the making that generates the work:

The heart of poetry is

an arc between grass blade and gown
hovering beneath an eclipse

"this keeps on writing"

With a kind of cinematic shift technique of closing-in on workaday reality, Gizzi's is a metonymic poetry that delights not only in the notion of substitute shape, but in the hum of its absence—a speech fascinated by the surrogate reality of pronouns, and the story behind the story. Gizzi posits a dialectic of the "beautiful lack" by which one wants to be repaired, and of the search for that "lost space this speech proposes."

—ROBERTO TEJADA

***The Precarious, The Art and Poetry of Cecilia Vicuña*, edited by M. Catherine de Zegher**
***Quipoem*, by Cecilia Vicuña, translated by Esther Allen**
**Wesleyan University Press (double edition), 1997**

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On pages *q.116* and *q.117* of Cecilia Vicuña's *Quipoem* ("an autobiography in debris") is a collection of familiar objects immersed in

darkness: a stack of large sacks at the corner of a stone wall, bloated and lumpy with whatever it is they contain (potatoes probably), a jumble of old lumber, parts of a plough or chair or table perhaps, sprawled among the bits of root and straw mixed with the soft loamy dirt. Strands of white luminous cord slash through the scene at different angles, like tracers from ricocheting bullets. The stones comprising the wall look so old they almost give off an odor, a smell of ancient civilization, Machu Picchu, stars cresting the Andes, rituals performed in gold, calculations carried in knots. The overall scene is peppered with luminous white dots, measled with its own weirdness. A closer examination reveals not one scene but two, joined together to form a whole. It is titled *La Bodega Negra, San Fernando, 1994,* which provides a generous clue to its identity. There is a trenchant dynamic to this Andean gestalt; a mesh of visible entities with invisible forces, a flavor of mystic calculation with earthy vibrato.

There is a word in Quechua (the language of the Incas still spoken by the indigenous peoples of Peru, Ecuador, Bolivia, Chile and Argentina) that may easily be applied to the scene above. The word–*huaca*–is defined by a mestizo chronicler named the Inca Garcilaso as "something sacred. . ."

> . . .like all those things that the devil talked to [the Quechua] about; that is, the idols, the cliffs, large rocks and trees which had the devil inside to make them believe that he was God. . .Also they call *huaca* all those things that in beauty or in excellence stand out from others of the same species, like a rose, an apple, or a *camuesa* or any kind of fruit that is larger or more beautiful than all the rest from that tree. . .On the other hand, they also call *huaca* ugly and monstrous things, those that cause fright and surprise . . .Also things that depart from their normal state are called *huaca*. . .

Hence, Vicuña's "autobiography in debris" is piquant with *huaca.* What is so engrossing about this work is not just its ethnopoetic mystique, but its invigorating connections to the North American and West European avant-garde. Duchamp's *Why Not Sneeze Rose Sélavy?* (birdcage, marble cubes, thermometer, and cuttlebone) percolates with *huaca,* as does his "mile of string" installation at the "First Papers of Surrealism" exhibit in the fall of 1942, which suggests nothing less than the orgasmic work of a *ayahuaska*-crazed arachnid. Joan Miró used to go to the beach every day "to collect things washed up by the tide. Things lying there, waiting for someone to discover their person-

ality." Picasso and Braque constructed collages from scraps of rubbish and Max Ernst transformed clippings from the illustrated papers of big business into a demonic, dreamlike unreality. Robert Irwin uses white, transclucent scrims, or a piece of string stretched taut in order to capture (as Lawrence Weschler remarks in his monograph on Irwin *Seeing Is Forgetting The Name Of The Thing One Sees)* ". . .the incidental, the transitory, the peripheral—that aspect of our experience that is both there and not there, the object and not the object of our sensations," ". . .that shiver of perception perceiving itself."

Examples abound. Artists Betye, Alison Saar, Jimmie Durham, David Hammons, and Kathy Vargas also make use of discarded objects. The uses Vicuña makes of these things (she calls them "little garbages") is, perhaps, most closely aligned with Kurt Schwitters, whose assemblages of nails and railway tickets and tatters of cloth possess a strange, poignant beauty. Schwitters' lacked the radical denial or intellectual acerbity of Duchamp's anti-art gesture and was manifestly more teleological in his approach; his assemblages were acts of sublimation rather than detonation. In *Ein Manifest,* Schwitters remarked that his materials shortened "the distance from intuition to the realization of the artwork" *[um den Weg von der Intuition bus zur Sichtbarmachung der künstlenschen Idee möglichst abzukürzen],* that the act of creation was a recognition *[Erkennen]* of rhythm and expression in nature. It is that nameless space—from intuition to realization—that Vicuña's work occupies. This is what she shares so strongly with Schwitters. "I speak to the moment in which the visible becomes invisible and vice versa," Vicuña remarks, "to the moment when the cognition, the definition has not yet been formed."

On page *q.92* of *Quipoem* (each number is preceded by a 'q,' as a reminder that all the work in this "autobiography in debris" are knots in a larger structure) is a squiggle of yarn—orange and red and green and brown—laid out on a small rectangle (12" X 14") of sheer ocher fabric. The yarn is knotted and looped at irregular intervals and several of the strands have been braided so that their colors are intertwined. The piece is titled *Quipu, 1991.* The quipu—which serves as the central metaphor throughout this collection—is a form of Inca computer. It is essentially a collection of cords with knots tied in them. The cords are generally made of cotton, and are often dyed one or more colors. One cord serves as the main cord; other cords are suspended from it. There is a level of *top cords* and a level of *pendant cords.* The cords are associated with different meanings depending on their vertical direction, their level (whether a main cord, pendant cord, or subsidiary cord) and relative positions within the same level. Also, each cord has a color. Color is fundamental to the symbolic system of the quipu.

*Quipoem* (Vicuña's penchant for punning parallels Duchamp and Joyce) blends mathematical calculation (the formulas the quipu is capable of computing are dizzyingly complex; Inca irrigation, terracing, storage for the dried potato required it) with intuitive, artistic figuration. (The word is actually printed **quipo**em). *Quipoem* begins with a single line—"The quipu that remembers nothing, an empty cord"—and moves chronologically up to "Arte Precario," a poem composed in New York in 1996. Vicuña is fascinated by etymology, which brings me to yet another important connection (discussing the work of this artist/poet is impossible without making one connection after another; I feel my brain turning into a quipu) that being the idea of *prayer,* particularly the sense of prayer as William James intended it in *The Varieties of Religious Experience:* "inward communion or conversation with the power recognized as divine." Vicuña enlarges it to mean a form of *doing,* and conflates it with a sense of the *precarious,* of strength from fragility, energy through change, continuity through dissolution: "The precarious was transformation/ prayer is change,/ 'the dangerous instant of transmutation.'" Turning through the pages of this collection, I am astonished by the imaginative uses to which Vicuña has put her bits of wood and thread; a simple glass of spilled milk is used to focus public attention on the 1,920 Columbian children who died from drinking contaminated milk ("the milk was spilled and the poem written on the pavement") or a film is made in which people (prostitutes, passers-by, beggars and policemen) are asked a simple question: "what is poetry to you?"

All poems in *Quipoem* have been translated by Esther Allen; photo credits for the various artworks—objects, quipus, on-site assemblages—go to a large number of people listed on *q.140,* including the artist herself. A few additional translations have been credited to Eliot Weinberger, who did the translations for the 1992 collection of Vicuña's poetry *Unravelling Words & the Weaving of Water.* Great attention has been paid to the precise meaning of the words, and the Spanish or Quechua have been untranslated when no English equivalent could be found. This is essential, as Vicuña treats words as tactile entities, plies, twists, and unravels words like cord on a quipu. Latin *precis* (prayer) is knotted into English "precarious;" "consciousness is *con* and *scire:* to join and to cut." Interspersed between pages of shrouded stone and tethered clay, poems (and etymologies) are doubly engrossed in a sense of materiality, but a materiality of a specific kind: soft, supple, durable, pendant, knotted, multicolored.

A second book—*The Precarious*—shares the same spine as *Quipoem.* The two books are bound counter to one another. *The Precarious* is a collection of five essays about the artist, edited by M. Catherine de

Zegher, plus an additional (and quite exhaustive) section containing biographical notes: solo exhibitions, group exhibitions, awards and honors, poetry books, lectures, poetry in anthologies, selected essays, critical bibliographies on Vicuña's poetry and art.

Each of the five essays in *The Precarious* discuss Vicuña's work with contrasting emphasis. Lucy Lippard's "Spinning the Common Thread" provides biographical background and situates Vicuña's work within an art-historical context, emphasizing the singularity of her sensibility: "Vicuña has never accepted the boundaries between cultural disciplines, creating a terrain of her own in the interstices–the role of the mestizo, or the coyote."

In *"Ouvrage:* Knot a Not, Notes as Knots," M. Catherine de Zegher focuses on the weave of Vicuña's perceptions and philosophy, "constellations, weavings, and language," ". . .the open interplay of elements, and the possibility of infinite recombination." I have read this essay several times now with a great deal of fascination; its connections carry far into general art practice ("Vicuña's *ouvrage* challenges such questions of recent art as the status of the object, the relation of the artist and the viewer/reader, bodily action, the space/time relation, the enviroment, the inner and outer, the connection of the visual to the other senses, at once moving viewers away from their habit of compartmentalizing artistic production into separate media") and implicating Andean weaving as a powerful impetus to gender and social identity (what the Maya of Mexico and Guatemala call *costumbre).* "Cecilia Vicuña, using thread and cloth as her main medium, proposes weaving as a form of participation issuing from popular culture, but she has always perceived and understood weaving as an alternative discourse and a dynamic model of resistance (as do most indigenous Latin American women)." Catherine de Zegher's discussion of felt is especially fascinating. ". . .felt is a supple, solid material that has an altogether different effect; it is 'an antifabric.' Since it involves no threads, no intertwining, but is only an entanglement of fibers obtained by fulling, it constitutes a smooth space." Never have I felt this way about felt before.

"Metaphor Spun: A conversation with Cecilia Vicuña," with Billie Jean Isbell and Regina Harrison, allows some of the artist's enthusiasms ("subterranean logic") to emerge.

> Once my work was shown in slides and readings in Cochabamba, Bolivia, and the director of the art institute said that local people, peasants, migrants crowded the room where my art was being shown and kept asking that

> room where my art was being shown and kept asking that it be repeated. My work spoke to them. There is a subterranean logic that allows them to understand my art. They understand the fertility of words, the sensual cognition I am communicating.

In "Cryptic Weaving," Hugo Méndez-Ramirez focuses on the shamanistic resonances of Vicuña's work, providing "access to the revelation, or epiphany, the divination," of Vicuña's "encounter with the ancient metaphors contained in the word itself." ". . .to the privilege that the vanguard writers give the metaphor, Vicuña adds the immanent vision that she learned from the Andean women of Peru."

Kenneth Sherwood concludes the collection with "Sound Written and Sound Breathing: Versions of Palpable Poetics," shuttling between "the many questions that weave through Vicuña's poems: Where is the poem? Who writes the poem? What is the relation between alphabetic and other writings, between speech and writing, between writing and reading, between reading aloud and performing, or between myth and poetry?"

—JOHN OLSON

## Noticings

*The Plurality of Worlds of Lewis,* Jacques Roubaud, translated by Rosmarie Waldrop, Dalkey Archive Press, 1995. $9.95. The way worlds might be is to be found destabilizing the world as it seems and the modes of the possible are to be found no longer hypothetical but actual and populating Jacques Roubaud's profound book, a book that offers, as he said introducing his reading of these works last November at St. Marks Church in the Bowery, writing that is perhaps poetry.

That is to say, a poetics constitutive of other possibilities and domains establishes poetry as a site of mentality allowing for other possible entities such as you, or you as a cluster of properties and

relations. This metaphysics allows the possibility of positing absence in terms of modern modal logic. "The impossible is not the case in any world," begins one poem. "This world: split in two, two irreducible, unconnected space-times," begins another. "All that a world could be, no matter what," begins a third.

This strategic reconception of "the world is all that is the case" renders the picture theorem of the world as an open work—except that indeterminacies are sooner to be found paradoxical, and except that the high degree of improbability has become invariant. In this plurality, irreconcilable perspectives and frameworks resist affable commerce:

> the impossible is not the case in any world.
> in any world everything, always, can only be possible.
> nothing impossible can be said
> otherwise, elsewhere
> except by saying. I hold nothing back
> by saying: "you."
> and I show nothing either."

Furthermore, Roubaud's restatement of possibility entertains a theory that contradicts it, and in several pieces an ersatz world that posits one world in many abstract representations makes its appearance. Within this world abstractly delineated you are concrete and possibly agnostic: hence your irrecoverable distance.

So, the initial provocation of these "perhaps" poems, arising from considerations of the modal logic of the American philosopher David Lewis, itself arises from and incorporates other possible linguistic worlds. "Everything is everything that happens, no matter what happens," says Deleuze paraphrasing Leibiz to provide for language's being the grounds by which worlds—including that of death—come into existence.

Completing the book are the sections "The Sickness of the Soul" and "Circles in Meditation." As with the first section, the author's note on "Circles in Meditation" declares its sources of intertextual matter and manner: an encyclopedia of moralizing conceits by the 17th-century Jesuit priest Etienne Binet provokes Roubaud's highly particularized linguistic "charm" from terms of botanical structures and functions. Another work, *The Community to Come,* by the 20th-century Italian philosopher and man of letters Gorgio Agamben also tempts citation. But the point of honor for Roubaud is to inhabit paradigms not of his own making through a profound mentality that has signature. With Roubaud each text implicates its own exemplary poetics.

Raphael Rubenstein, *The Basement of the Cafe Rilke,* Hard Press, 1996. $10.00. Melancholia undressed might be characteristic, or Minerva waiting—yet, at any rate this fine first collection of lyrics presupposes the poetics of Surrealism for a quotidian introspective practice that may touch base with the New York School or its avatars.

"What I Had with Me that Day in 1985," for instance, is written to construe the self as self-consciously artifactual, and aesthetic: the self playing the role of waiting as though in French film, a film say, by Truffaut or Goddard. A park, a lame pigeon, "a supine blonde," a cigarette—obligatory apparatus in the scenario that overtakes situation—is assembled to nicely transpose the Surrealist distancing effect to a modernity already retro.

Writing through the literariness of Surrealist devices, Rubenstein rings changes on a list of matters lost and matters found (Via Farini: Night #1") and on the muted anticlimax that substitutes for disappointment ("Via Farini: September Songs"). Liquid free-verse emphasizing vowels establishes the line as lyrical, in Rubenstein's own version of Reverdy's "lyricism as reality." Ashbery's pliable line yet also Ungaretti's and Montale's lyricism of emptiness inform these poems. Meanwhile, reverie is subjected to literariness and to arbitrary formal schemes throughout this book, but asystematically, and the prevailing sense of the volume as a whole is that of an unlegislated nebula of contingent mental events. Perturbed yet unwilling to predetermine a formalism for the book in its entirety, the poet is declaring for an anti-corporate body of writing. The subjectivity that is the subject of these lyrics is neither trivial, nor inflated to omniscience, and the subject stands in its own penumbra, an object among other objects, a mental event among representations in a world that remains largely uninterpreted.

—MARJORIE WELISH

Here were
relic's years,

the local day
in flames among
its maddened flowers,

the tremulous voice
of darkness
aged in days

of lace, as if
it were a bell
falling off in space.

*from* "The Naked Lunch"

The poems in Paul Hoover's *Viridian* "live / in the room / of time" where "Nothing / real is fast," and act as intricate compression-machines, slowing time and painting it with words. Hoover's first five books of poetry, starting with *Letter To Einstein Beginning Dear Albert,* in 1979, conjoin quirky surrealist "narrative" and personable New York school buoyancy, although that buoyancy is often contained by form, as in the bravura series of sonnets at the core of his 1986 volume, *Nervous Songs.*

Hoover is sometimes associated with language poetry because of his work as editor of the *Norton Postmodern American Poetry* and the magazine *New American Writing,* and indeed, our national "journal of record," *The New York Times,* christened him a language poet in their silly and ill-informed map of contemporary poetry. He does make use, throughout this sixth volume, of a range of dispersive and randomizing strategies, such as the Hugh Kenner/Charles O. Hartman software program Travesty (used in the formation of several poems from his own screenplay for Joseph Ramirez's 16 mm color film *Viridian).* But Hoover is not a language poet. His impulse is lyric, although his best-sustained arguments are always tempered with irony and disjunction, and enmeshed in cultural and historical time.

In *Viridian,* time and flux are center stage. The reader's attention is directed "Under the century, under the text," where "Gulls sweep past what changes":

Synthesis is

its merit,
the unity in
scatter

coming on
like trucks,
though meaning

shits on that.
Thought ought not
resemble

that which it
endorse?
Rupture loves

the difference . . .

*from* "Desire"

In "South of X," a rich, varicolored poem dedicated to a fellow conscientious objector killed in Vietnam, "the century falls / asleep in a / pink electric year . . . Every camera bleeds. / Yet they wear / their caskets proudly . . . on the / shining floors of / history . . ." As always at such moments in a Hoover poem, however, a comic elbow intrudes, reminding us that "the / meatloaf is divine / halfway through the / age . . ." Reminding us, too, of our solemn historical duties:

. . . Each evening
we are gathered
to be the

men and women
Elvis might have
been . . .

The grief of a century is splayed open, turned on its ear, spun sideways, so that when the poem suddenly asks "Curtains rip. Can't / years?" we are surprised, after so much shapeshifting, to be unprepared for what we feel.

In "Impossible Object," "Erotic play / within closed / systems results / in wedge // and sphere / a phallic / ball that /rolls downhill / / through the /house of / Rosalind Krauss, / who dreams // its bumpy / passage across / storm-lit fields . . ." But its bumpy passage, like the passage of our attention, is marvelously slowed by formal stricture. The entire second section of *Viridian* and much of the third is composed of poems in which words and stanzas are scrupulously counted out, though not in the usual metrical fashion. This work, with its enormous compression, the musical and thematic weight of each line, has the sense of breakthrough, and the result is some of the most powerful poems in the strong, concluding third section. Here, Hoover brings all he knows to bear in lush, intense poems like "The Garden," in which " . . .the world / is coming near . . ." although, as ever, it " . . . watches the wrong / parade . . .":

. . . Traditional
as dust, the

world remains insane.
The scent of
rain and money

possesses our names
and thoughts: rhythmic
gait of monsters

beneath the hieroglyphs.
Stained with present
tense, the coming

world is near,
its wallpaper roses
giant in the

dark and literal
as disorder. Knocking
at the known.

—RACHEL LODEN

**Our Yasusada**
**a review of *Doubled Flowering: from the Notebooks of Araki Yasusada*, edited and translated by Tosa Motokiyu, Ojiu Norinaga and Okura Kyojin. Published by Roof Books, 168 pages**

When the poems, collaborations and correspondences of Araki Yasusada first appeared in literary journals, American and British editors published the work with great enthusiasm. Offered as the poems of a newly discovered Hiroshima survivor, the writing was assumed to be the authentic translation in English of a Japanese postal clerk whose life forever changed on August 6, 1945. Later, Yasusada was revealed to be a fictional character, created by one of the supposed translators, Tosa Motokiyu, yet another pseudonym for an author (supposedly dead) who wished his identity to remain unknown. Since this revelation, American scholars and poets have debated the duplicitous circumstances surrounding the publication of these poems. To complicate things still more, Yasusada's poems and biography were submitted with a sketch of the author to various journals by Kent Johnson, a Freeport, Ill., community college instructor. Stand Magazine, in England, described Johnson as "the active go-between in all these translations." That magazine (as well as American Poetry Review) later demanded its money back from him when the "hoax" was discovered. To this day, however, the author's true identity is in question, but the circumstances surrounding the publication of the poems reveal the possible motivations of western poetics editors.

By now, the Yasusada poems have been inflated beyond the realm of what we usually think of as poetry. The "hoax," in its complexity, has acted as a cultural gauge that reveals the motivations, fashions, and tastes of poets and editors who constitute the supply and demand of today's "experimental" poetry markets. The Boston Review, Lingua Franca, Countermeasures, Poetry Review in England, Jacket Magazine in Australia and other literary journals have debated the meanings implied by the cultural context from which these poems supposedly originated and in which they finally were published. Newspapers like the Village Voice, the Financial Times of London, the Manchester Guardian and the Sydney Morning Herald have run articles. And the Asahi Shimbun, Japan's leading daily, published a front page story entitled, "A Fictional 'Hibakusha' Poet: Forgery or Desire for Union?" The poems, and the stories behind them, have acted as a lens through which contemporary motivations for the publication and appreciation of poetry come into finer focus. Now, the recent publication of the

book provides an opportunity to look at the Notebooks in collected form, and to examine with more circumspection the truly complex issues raised there.

There is a quote from St. Augustine toward the end of *Doubled Flowering: from the Notebooks of Araki Yasusada.* The words of this church father offer an indirect defense for the complicated publication of the work.

> How could a picture of a horse be a true picture unless it were a false horse? Or an image of a man in a mirror be a true image unless it were a false man? So if the fact that they are false in one respect helps certain things to be true in another respect, why do we fear falseness so much and seek truth as such a great good? (DF, p. 118).

The poems, letters and notes contained in this paradoxical and demurely passionate book speak to an American audience familiar with the aesthetic developments of the last thirty years. As Marjorie Perloff suggests in her essay, "In Search of the Authentic Other: The Poetry of Araki Yasusada," (reprinted in the appendix), the mysterious production of these poems challenges an "avant garde" aesthetics that accepts theories questioning creative identity, while at the same time remaining attached to the individual biographies behind artistic works. Foucault's famous 1969 essay, "What Is an Author," suggests that the individual is no longer the sole creator of art, but a point of transmission implicated in the social diffusions of discourse. Criticism does not focus on the impulses of the writer, but on the uses of language, particularly social or political usage. The self, that social construction, is questioned endlessly, as language reveals the fragments of perceived, and fashioned, experience. Identity and its historical determinations, so entangled within racial and gender politics, have now become the source of formal focus among the western "avant garde," that mandarin network of academics and artists camped on university lawns, if not in the very halls.

What troubles so many about the Yasusada Notebooks is the degree to which that apocryphal author's previously proposed and eagerly believed "authenticity" complicates the protocols for considering the problematics of personal identity and otherness. Foucault's authorial death sentence liberated the means of artistic production and, on the surface, gave writers a freedom from the perceived restraints of one's given identity. He gave theoretical permission to creative acts that artists like Shakespeare or Keats practiced as a necessary tool of their trade. But just as Foucault rearticulated this

freedom from a single, constructed identity, the social climate of the United States became entrenched in identity politics, with racial and gender groups marketed as cultural commodities. It was this identity-trained climate that originally created such a favorable reception for the Yasusada works. Now that Yasusada has been revealed as a fictional character, however, a cultural nerve has been exposed, placing artistic identity issues in conflict with the social concerns of identity. The book's controversial reception suggests that post-structuralist theories of identity are less revolutionary and important than they once seemed. The "avant garde" pays lip-service to these theoretical issues, but in practice imaginative or sympathetic creative acts must retain the author's stamp of authentication, due to both "politically correct" social concerns and because of the cultural market value still attached to an author's name. The complicated publication of the poems and letters now collected in *Doubled Flowering* confronts preconceptions of identity, challenging all assumptions of the relationship between author, text and the audience's biographical expectation. It is forcing the confrontation, long ignored by U.S. intellectuals, between contradictory models of identity.

Today, texts often are read with the reader's subjectivity privileged over the author's, as long as the writer is identified as one of "us." When a work is presented, in this case, by a Japanese Hiroshima survivor, the focus on the creator's identity and cultural heritage is heightened. Suddenly, the racial identity of the author is significant to the reception of the work. This book provokes serious questions that address our relationship to the "other," and to issues of what Edward Said calls "Orientalism." But the real controversy is in the way the poems were received by a willing audience of contemporary western poetics editors, not in the production of the work. As Augustine discusses above, or Keats addresses in his statement of negative capability, artists have been allowed, for some time, to transcend identity. This is the shamanic lineage of art. It is the deliberate intellectual and emotional act of embodying the other, sympathetically embracing some thing or some one outside of one's own received identity to find the necessary values of language capable of sublimating one's chosen mask into broader realms of experience.

This radical displacement of self is an ancient tool that today is a symptom of late 20th century life. The altered temporal and spatial references of the contemporary world contribute to an overwhelming sense of psychic displacement. Likewise, the pressures of a late-century capitalist economy intensify the perceptions of power's corruptive process, broadening our awareness of the contradictory desires for both social freedom and self preservation. The resulting

personal and social fragmentations are destabilizing in the speed and greed of a global society. And since the field of poetry often functions as a public space for private complaints, we distrust the imaginative power of art, preferring instead works of personal testament, criticism or experience. In our high-speed, high-tech and increasingly anonymous culture, the imagination no longer serves as a source of trandscendency or transference. It is instead a subjective point of departure for the unfocused "possibilities" of an inward and alienated investigation into the narrow "spaces" of personal impression and opinion. The goal of art today is to reveal any possibility, regardless of its value, because "value" itself is in question. Perhaps this is why so many people have been disturbed and angered by the work of Araki Yasusada. The "hoax" reveals social and aesthetic contradictions that are uncomfortable to study or accept. *Doubled Flowering* is an imaginative gesture that succeeded because its creator or creators took the fiction a step beyond the usual publishing standards, pressing the need to address literary value. By disguising the fiction of this work, the author(s) were able to show us our desire for belief, a desire that is also the recurrent theme of the popular FOX station television series, *The X-Files*. The words, "I want to believe," are written on a poster in agent Fox Moulder's office on that show. Under present social circumstances, this statement can be applied to the hyper-sensitive intellectual culture that first received the publications of Yasusada. Although clues to the dubious identity of the author were distributed throughout the work, the poems were published and praised. Theoretical scruples regarding identity were abandoned temporarily because the work and the story surrounding it appealed to an urge that exists far beyond the fragmented boundaries of poetic circles. We wanted to believe in Yasusada, and then failed to see the humor in our desire when, once again, belief found itself on shaky ground. Somehow, the imaginitive reality expressed by the poems failed to validate the enthusiasm for them once the "hoax" was revealed.

*Doubled Flowering* unites character and story with the philosophical obsessions of contemporary poetry. The narrative is inferred from the chronological sequence of poems, letters, notes and English language exercises presented under the great mushroom cloud shadows of Hiroshima. Loss and language emerge as the dominant themes, relaying with subtle restraint the great passions of suffering after the 1945 bombings. The book opens with a haunting simplicity of language that hangs like meat on a hook for our devouring eyes. "Walking in the vegetable patch / late at night, I was startled to find / the severed head of my / mad daughter lying on the ground" ('Mad Daughter and Big-Bang', p. 11). The daughter, who died soon after the bombings,

becomes a recurrent image, conveying the grief and sorrow of a personal and communal loss. The first half of the Notebooks particularly convey this curiously distant, but harrowing tale through dream-like invocations of the daughter. "Then children will cry out in joy, or curl in sorrow like autumn leaves. It is not for us. . .to be done about it. Such rising and falling is endless and without explaining" (Letter to Akutagawa Fusei, p. 14). "The crying girl sounds like a loon. . . / Why does her mournful sound call to mind the sky / through the dome of the Industrial Promotion Hall" (Loon and Dome, p. 15). The details of daily life mix with the eternal memory of that loss of wife, children and friends. The final stanza of 'Echo And Visitors,' tags a parenthetical address to the deceased wife in a poem that, on the surface, refers to a wrestling match: "(And you, Nomura, / in your morning kimono, / the name of our daughter / half-called as she strolls / the thistle-lined path. . .)" (p. 21). Personal loss interweaves with the daily life of a man pressured by his own pain and attracted to the world of literal detail. A kind of beauty still exists for him even as he seeks its obliteration in language.

As the years advance through the Notebooks, Yasusada's focus moves more directly to language and the value of its material potency. He studies English and is introduced to the American poetry of the late fifties and early sixties, the San Francisco Renaissance poet Jack Spicer mysteriously becoming a great influence (see Perloff's discussion of this in the appendix). Yasusada's collaborative Rengas are written with an attentiveness that shares formal ties to the "new-sentence" parataxis of Ron Silliman. The 'Nouveau Riche Renga' of 1966 is exemplary: "Ants exult on the tense blossoms of the peonies. / So, calling names, the characters cluster or disperse in irregular designs. / *(fifteen seconds, random, mokug yo)* / 'Isn't it a shame the farmers have almost forgotten the 'Dance of the Clacking Sticks?' he asks'" (p. 67). The intensified attention to language still resounds with references to Japanese "temples," "geishas," "silk trees," "willow leaves" and other elements traditionally associated with Japan by the West. But the echo of that previous loss filters through the paratactic layers, representing emotion without expressing it; invoking sorrow without revealing a deeper emotional experience. This subtlety shapes the pain into digestible tropes for a specific western audience. In a late poem, dedicated to the Japanese novelist Origuchi Shinobu, Yasusada writes:

> Her kisses tasted of blood, or wellwater flecked with rust?

She folded her Rose of the Snow kimono over the corner of the futon.

So you think she knew your suffering in advance?

Not knew, but represented it.

What do you mean, the right to private violence?

In her company the world was no more than the splashing
water of
her voice (p. 100).

Years have passed since the character, Yasusada, lost his wife to the nuclear holocaust of Hiroshima, so we can imagine him sublimating his own tortured life through the potentially powerful possibilities of aesthetic form. "We were hurtling through a transparent mirror" (p. 100), he writes, attempting to unite personal experience and objective reality through the mediating process of language. But rage is absent. Anger is processed through a formal parataxis. Yasusada seeks understanding to an event that challenges *any* understanding. In the aftermath of the great nuclear destruction of the Bomb, his creative impulse rises from the ashes to bridge an impossible chasm. Yasusada is perfect for an audience of victors because he offers pleasure out of guilt in a language particularly appreciated in the West. Yasusada is a humble seducer who plays with our sincerity, but he is not a reliable witness to the suffering of a post-war Japan.

Still, it is unfair to reduce the imaginative existence of Yasusada's life to anything that is somehow inferior to what we consider "real life." Experience and imagination often are blurred by the creative process to express the deepest human perceptions. Yasusada's Notebooks address human suffering and reveal the passion of a man in vain search for answers to the tragic event that changed his life. Language is Yasusada's salvation just as it is the final hope for western artists who wish to subvert the unfocused, destructive reality of power. From an American view-point, these works are a tremendous success. They challenge our assumptions of race and our positions as kindred spirits to the great destructors of that war. Stll, we want to believe in a real Yasusada because a real Yasusada relieves us of our guilt as inheritors of that fiery legacy. He does not condemn the events of Hiroshima and Nagasaki: he seeks understanding by employing language in forms that the West can understand. We want to embrace Yasusada because he is magnanimous enough to place the suffering of his life within the

comparative focus of his victors. Yet, this is precisely the limitation of the Notebooks, and hints at its uncertain authorship. An imagined Yasusada does not provide enough redemptive value to unmask our own racial and aesthetic delusions. Since we no longer grant ourselves permission to believe the imagination, we turn to the evidence, the reductive echo of our own limitations, thereby refusing Yasusada's offer of hope.

Of course, there is still the issue of the work itself. Sadly, Yasusada is sometimes more concerned with theoretical or philosophical issues in the poem than he is engaged with what he senses outside of it. While his conflicted impulses are at times delicately revealed, he also can orchestrate language so that it impedes the emotional immediacy, second-guessing experience with the limitations of the formal gesture. He hints at the complicated pressures of a post-war Japan, but instead of addressing those pressures, he writes himself out of the book. Yasusada has reasons for doing so, reasons that ring with familiarty to "postmodern" ears. In a letter to Ogiwara Seisensui, he writes, "Our heroes are the 'no-thought poets' of the late Edo, who held the sweetness of dissonance to be the deep measure of renga. Their path of pulling mind into the marrow of language itself is our path. For in the suchness of utterance there is as much mystery as in all the plum blossoms of the *Manyoshu*. . ." (p. 52). As Yasusada's approach to language turns more cerebral, his poetry becomes oddly removed from the engaged emotional perception that generated the depth in early poems such as "Mad Daughter and Big-Bang." Perhaps this is one reason why Yasusada never publish during his fictional lifetime. Maybe he sensed this inwardness as a limitation, preventing connective tissue from forming in his work. Regardless of Yasusada's indifference to publication, his anonymity is the only validating truth the West could ever accept. The thought of an "experimental" Japanese poet, practicing his craft in utter obscurity, so humbly, with such passive persistence, was too perfect for an American audience seeking moral elevation in the art of the culturally distant "other." When it turned out that Yasusada was a fictional character, the West turned away, not because of the lie, but because there was no life at all, no biography submitted to fulfill our own expectations.

*Doubled Flowering* cannot be ignored, however, simply because of the questionable identity of its author. It touches us too deeply. The work is disturbing because it complicates our preconceptions of the emotional aftermath of the Bomb. It forces us to imagine that life, however distant our sympathy may be. And as social artifact, the work flourishes for us in America because of this complication. Our conception of poetry demands that it functions within acceptable forms, and

those forms distance us from the events that shadow Yasusada's "life." We want to believe in Yasusada's identity as a Hiroshima survivor, but we want that identity sublimated through formal gestures that preserve our own palatable preconceptions. There are, as Perloff suggests, poems by Hiroshima survivors that use language directly to convey the horrors of their experience. But it is not the horrors that interest us so much as the identity of those who experienced the resulting destruction. How does one imagine a life after Hiroshima? And, how does one react when it is discovered that life after such an event is unimaginable? Therein lies the value of the Notebooks, not as art per se, but as a measure of the social navigations permissible after Hiroshima.

My problem with this book is that it stops itself short of a greater fullness because its focus is directed toward a limited audience. There are moments, however, when even my own reservations and pretensions submit to the strange and intoxicating movement of the better poems. In "Dream and Charcoal," Yasusada again expresses grief over the death of his daughter. "And then she said: I have gone toward the light and become beautiful. / And then she said: I have taken a couple of wings and attached them to the various back-parts on my body / . . . To which she replied: without nothing is when all things die. / Which is when she had a battle with the twigs. / Which is when the charcoal was passed from her body to mine" (p. 46). The mysterious imagery cast within the rhetorical repetitions opens this poem out against a background of destruction that is never directly addressed. This poem, about personal and cultural loss, also expresses the submersion of one's feelings into a surreal landscape of private memory and near mythic experience. The emotional space is recognizable, and the poem resonates with a dignified persistence that realizes death without giving in to it. It seeks a resolution of meaning to an emotional experience that denies meaning. Its elusiveness, framed by the events of Yasusada's biography, is compelling, and it accomplishes something that is rare for a poem of such paratactic distance. The force of Yasusada's story elevates this poem with an increasing momentum. Although at times other poems are formally limited, the subject here is realized with clarity and compassion. "The real washes up like a dream from the unreal" (p. 117), writes Yasusada in a letter to Jack Spicer. Likewise, "the unreal washes up from the real." *Doubled Flowering,* at its best moments, reveals these inversions, showing the coexistence of an imagined life with the experienced.

Perhaps the finest poem in the book is written in a direct, challenging language. Yasusada writes a poem through the voice of his dead wife. The poem's irony and playful satire gently chastise the artistically careful Yasusada.

> Your poems are very beautiful, so pure
> and classical in voice and tone; the mythylogicol [sic]
> allusions in contemporary context daring
> yet precise. Astonished, a friend of mine likened
> your resonance to that of Catullus. I am in love
> with those lines that open the ode on Persephone:
>
> *That hair curled with hot irons,*
> *drenched in myrrh, Turnus is driven*
> *at high speed by the Furies. . .*
>
> Who could ever know that behind such a voice,
> is the heart and soul of an asshole? (p. 77)

The final stanza addresses Yasusada's artistic pretensions, and indirectly, the poetic source of those pretensions. Yasusada gains aesthetic permission from the art of a western model. Here, that model's "heart and soul" is related to an orifice of intolerant necessity. Our Yasusada is caught in a contradiction of impulses that reveal the repellent issues raised by *Doubled Flowering*'s publication. An imaginary West meets in an imaginary East to address an audience that must live with the very real results of 1945. In this case, the active intelligence of language moves through a character of confused and hidden origin, leaving us with the rhetorical question: what ultimately is real? Is it the verifiable author of that language, or the results of a sympathy deep enough to problematize the very life the imagination seeks to convey?

—DALE SMITH

# CONTRIBUTORS

KENWARD ELMSLIE's *Selected Poems* will be published this fall by Coffee House Press. KENNETH IRBY's *Call Steps* was published in 1992 by Station Hill/Tansy. ANNE GORRICK lives in New York's Mid-Hudson Valley. Her work has appeared in journals including Open 24 Hours, Big Scream, Hunger, The South Carolina Review, and Petroglyph. ROSMARIE WALDROP collaborated with Keith Waldrop in *Well Well Reality* (The Post-Apollo Press, 1998). DAN FEATHERSTON's *Rooms* was recently published by Paper Brain Press in San Diego. ROBERTO TEJADA has an essay on the work of the Brazilian photographer Miguel Rio Branco, in a recent issue of Aperture devoted to the Río de Luz series of Latin American photography. His poems have appeared or are forthcoming in Talisman and Crayon. He continues to edit Mandorla magazine, now in its 6th issue. With the 6th issue, ALAN GILBERT and Kristin Prevallet ceased to edit apex of the M, and are now living in Brooklyn. ELIOT WEINBERGER's most recent book is *Written Reaction* (Marsilio, 1996). JACKSON MAC LOW's *Pieces O' Six* (1992) is still available from Sun & Moon. E. CAMERON SCOTT's poems in this issue form part of a larger project with the working title *States of Naming;* other poems from this sequence will be appearing in Chain and Borderlands. An excerpt from TINA ROTENBERG's *No Name No Number No Address* appeared in Sulfur #42. ADRIENNE RICH's *Midnight Salvage* will appear this fall from Norton. CHRIS SIA is in prison in California; he will be released in 1999. Recent publications of the poetry of ANDRE BRETON (1896-1996) in English include *Earthlight* (tr. by Bill Zavatsky and Zack Rogow) and *Ralentir Travaux* (with Paul Eluard and René Char; tr. by Keith Waldrop). MARK POLIZZOTTI is the author of *Revolution of the Mind: The Life of André Breton* and the translator of several of Breton's works, including *The Lost Steps, Break of Day* (with Mary Ann Caws), *Conversations,* and *Anthology of Black Humor.* He lives near Boston. JOHN OLSON is working on a discursive survey of air, all aspects of air, chemistry, flight, respiration, winds, tornadoes, etc. He lives in Seattle. MAXINE SHEETS-JOHNSTONE is an independent scholar who teaches periodically in the Department

of Philosophy at the University of Oregon. Her books include *The Roots of Thinking* (1990), *Giving the Body its Due* (1992) and *The Roots of Power* (1994). BRUCE BEASLEY's most recent book is *The Creation* which won the 1993 Ohio State University Press Award. He has new poems forthcoming in Gettysburg Review, Iowa Review, Kenyon Review, Ploughshares, and Double Take. NANCY LOCKE is Assistant Professor of Art History at Wayne State University in Detroit. She has published on art in France in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, including most recently "Manet's 'Le Déjeuner sur l'herbe' as a Family Romance," in Paul H. Tucker, ed. *Manet's 'Le Déjeuner sur l'herbe'* (Cambridge University Press, 1998). A Dedalus Foundation Senior Fellow this year, she is currently working on Cubist sculpture. CHARLES BERNSTEIN is the editor of a collection of essays, *Close Listening,* recently published by Oxford University Press. JAMES HELLER LEVINSON lives in Chatsworth, CA; he is currently doing poetic investigation on the Alameda district in Los Angeles. MILTON KESSLER's *The Grand Concourse* (MSS, 1990) is still available. CAROLYN BURKE, the biographer of Mina Loy *(Becoming Modern,* UCal Press, 1997), is currently researching a biography on Lee Miller. KEVIN KILLIAN is the author of *Little Men, Argento Series,* and *Arctic Summer* (all 1997). With Lewis Ellingham he has written *Poet Be Like God: Jack Spicer and the San Francisco Renaissance* (Wesleyan, 1998). SYLVIE KANDE is an Assistant Professor of Africana Studies and French at NYU; she is a specialist in Francophone African and Caribbean literature. MARJORIE WELISH is a recipient of a Howard Foundation Fellowship in poetry for 1998-99. Her essay "CentraTemplates" is included in *Uncontrollable Beauty,* an anthology of writings on aesthetics, edited by Bill Beckley and David Shapiro. RACHEL LODEN's poems have appeared in Chelsea, Arshile, Antioch Review, and American Letters & Commentary. DALE SMITH coedits with Michael Price the magazine Mike & Dale's Younger Poets out of Austin TX.

NOTE: as announced at the end of Sulfur #42: Sulfur will end with a special double issue, spring 2000. #44 is also a special issue on non-American English language poetry edited by Jenny Penberthy and Marjorie Perloff. There are no more regular issues, thus all non-solicited contributions will be sent back unread.

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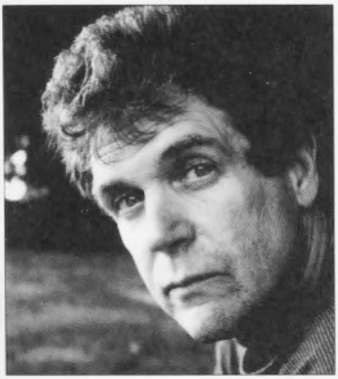

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